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COMICS INTERNATIONAL

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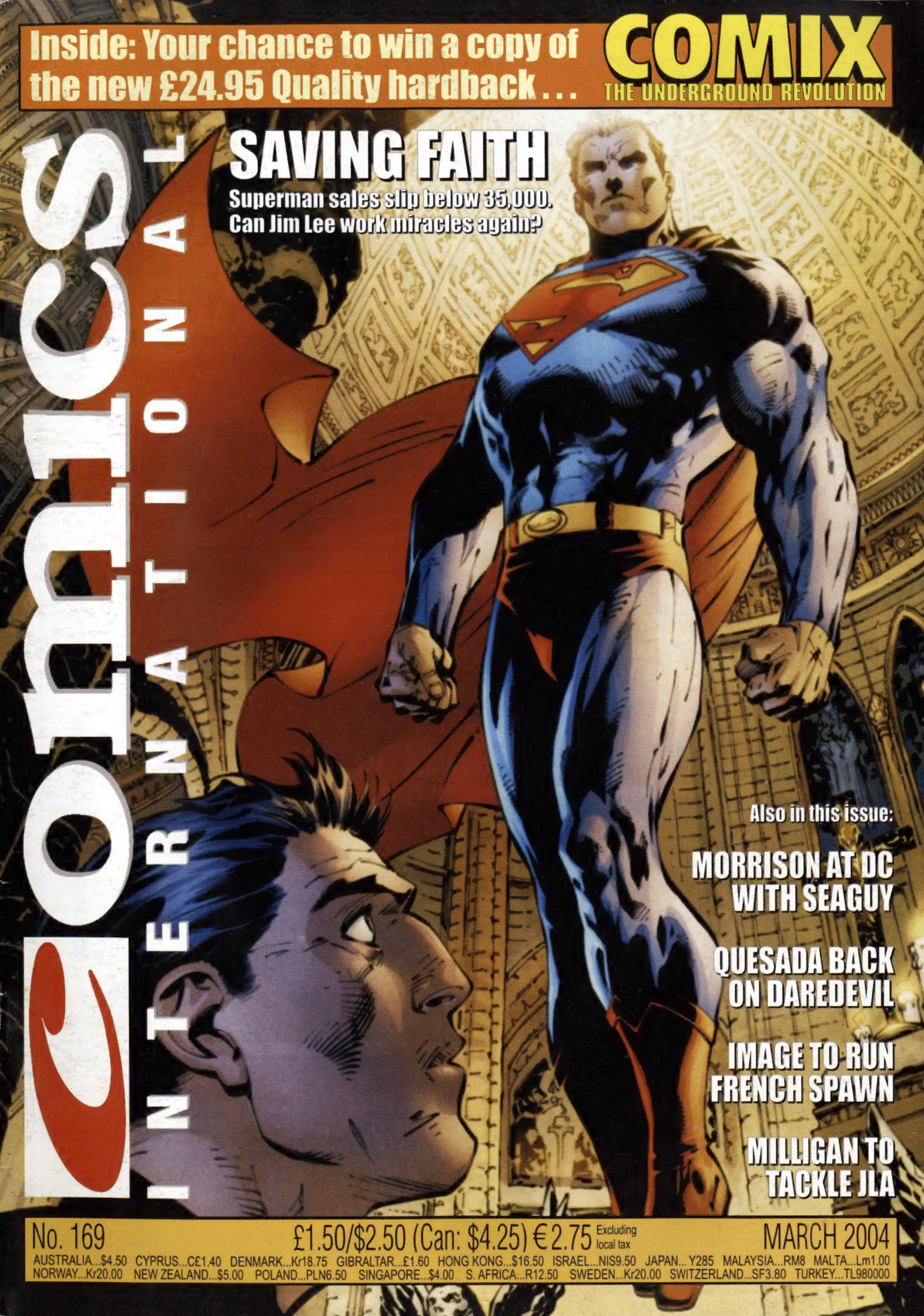

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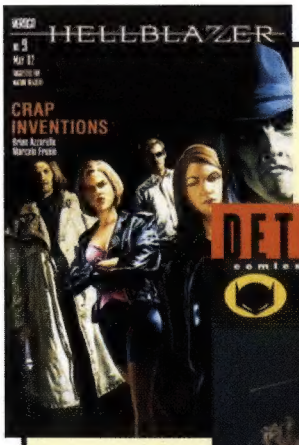

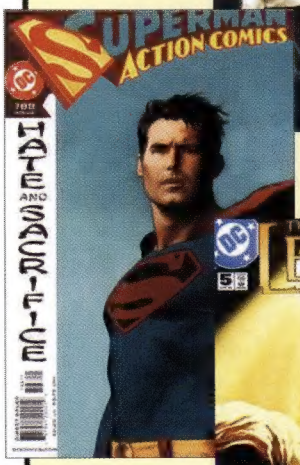

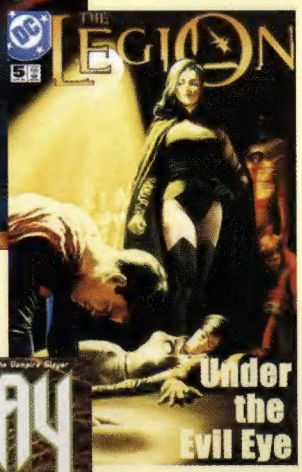

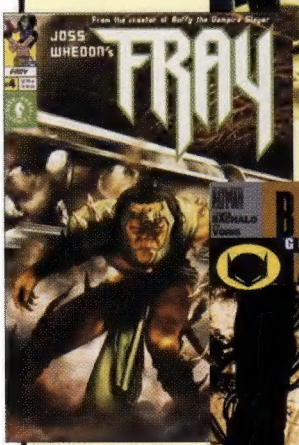

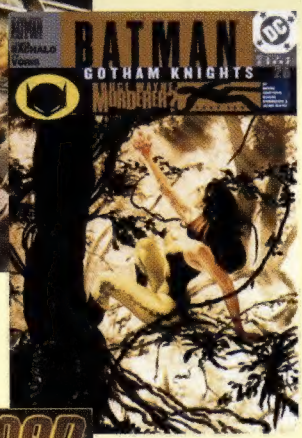

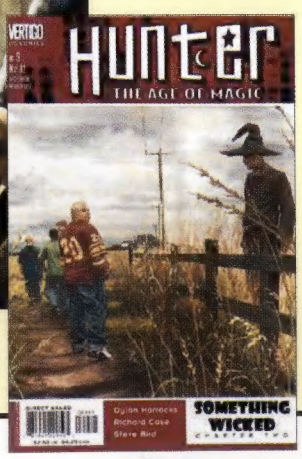

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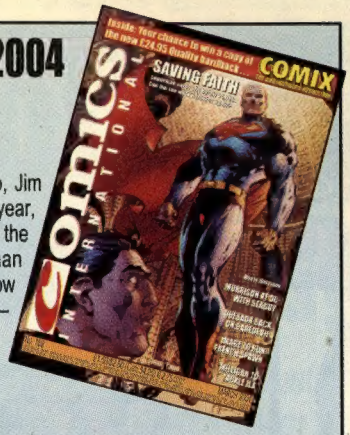

Inside this issue

COVER: Together with writer Jeph Loeb, Jim Lee breathed new life into Batman last year, adding as many as 100,000 copies on to the monthly comic's sales. With Superman sales at an all-time low, can Lee – now teamed with writer Brian Azzarello – repeat the miracle? Story on page 12

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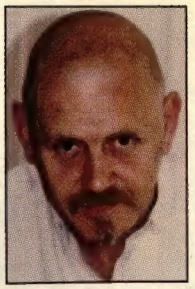

Editorial
Dez Skinn

EVER since Pacific Comics signed up a disillusioned Jack Kirby and launched a viable alternative to the corporate face of colour comicbooks in 1981, publishing indie titles has been a tempting game.

Just about anybody who can write or draw has dreams about setting up their own imprint. That some can only write shopping lists or draw curtains isn't necessarily seen as a setback.

...But finance can be.

Let's play a little game of "So You Want to be a Comics Publisher" and, giving some credit to entrepreneurial souls who aren't poachers turned gamekeepers, let's equally assume that despite your own creative tendencies, you're happy to take a back seat in favour of better writers and more talented artists.

You need a co-worker (running the show solo is bad news: you go stir crazy and have nobody to bounce ideas off, or do you believe you get it right every time?)

You need an office (nobody is keen on visiting your back bedroom, and your parent or partner won't enjoy tripping over boxes, getting your work calls on their phone, or strangers wandering around).

You need at least one computer, a phone, and all the obvious trimmings from a scanner to a kettle. Best make it a limited company too, with limited liabilities in case it goes wrong. Last thing you want to lose is your beloved comics collection!

Even without publishing anything, that little lot won't leave much change out of £60,000 a year. It's called overhead, and having Image or Dark Horse springboard your company won't reduce it a jot.

So now all you need is product. Let's be optimistic and say every idea you launch is a success, every writer and artist stays with you, and the printer gives you the best payment terms ever – despite never having heard of you before. Let's say you don't need a launch budget to advertise these sure-fire winners, they sell themselves. Let's go crazy and even ignore the dreaded concept of cashflow.

Once you've paid creators, production and print bills, your five comics a month (minimum) need to make an extra £1,000 profit each to pay overheads. £500 profit per comic per month means you can pay your bills but you guys earn nothing. And let's not even get started on taxes.

Now you can guess why Pacific Comics only lasted three years before its bosses went to work for other companies.

But despair not: Dark Horse started publishing from a comicshop's back room the year after Pacific collapsed and will soon be celebrating its 20th anniversary.

So, are you feeling lucky? Well, are you... publisher?

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VS

NICK "THE MOUTH" BARRUCCI

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Architect of Silver Age passes away aged 88

Above: The cover to 1974's ***Amazing World of DC Comics*** *#3; art by Joe Kubert. The issue was a tribute to Julie Schwartz. DC followed it in 1985 with* The Last Earth-Prime Story. *Published in* ***Superman*** *#411 in celebration of the acclaimed editor's 70th birthday, the tale was written by Elliot S Maggin and drawn by regulars Curt Swan and Murphy Anderson. It featured Schwartz in a dual role as both the Earth-Prime editor he is in real life and as an Earth-One Bowery bum.*

Industry mourns death of acclaimed editor who championed DC's revival of superheroes in 1950s and '60s

DC'S editor emeritus, Julius 'Julie' Schwartz died in New York on Sunday, February 8 from complications from pneumonia. He was 88.

A major force in the establishment of early SF fandom, Schwartz was born on June 19, 1915 in the Bronx, New York.

In 1932 he created science fiction's first fanzine, **The Time Traveler**, with fellow enthusiasts Mort Weisinger and Forrest J Ackerman.

With Weisinger, Schwartz – who helped organise the first World Science Fiction Convention in 1939 – formed Solar Sales Service. The first literary agency specialising in SF, its many clients included Ray Bradbury, Robert Bloch, Alfred Bester and H P Lovecraft.

All-Star Comics

Leaving the world of SF in 1944, he was hired by Sheldon Mayer to join All-American Comics as script editor. Among the numerous titles he worked on for that company, which was later absorbed into DC, were **Flash Comics**, **All-Star Comics** and **Green Lantern**.

As interest in superheroes waned in the late 1940s, he moved on to such series as **All-American Western**, **Danger Trail** and **Rex the Wonder Dog**. His passion for SF brought about the launch of **Mystery in Space** and **Strange Adventures** and the creation of such fondly-remembered strips as *Atomic Knights*, *Captain Comet*, *Space Museum*, *Star Hawkins* and *Space Cabby*.

But Schwartz will be best remembered for his revitalisation of the then-moribund superhero genre.

Major milestone

This began in 1956 with the introduction of the Silver Age Flash in **Showcase** #4 *[see below]*. Schwartz followed this major milestone in the development of US comics with new versions of Green Lantern, Hawkman and the Atom. He also spearheaded the creation of the Justice League of America and of Adam Strange, possibly DC's best-known SF hero.

In 1964, Schwartz – who transformed DC's Universe into a complex multiverse with his 1961 introduction of Earth-2 – also forged a new look when he took over the line of flagging Batman titles, which he edited until 1978.

Following Weisinger's 1971 retirement, he also took over the Superman line, which he edited until 1985.

Schwartz, who continued acting as DC's goodwill ambassador until his death, retired in 1987.

DC provides springboard for Marvel Age

SALES of superhero comics began to fall after the end of the Second World War. They kept dropping until 1956.

The turning point came when editor Julie Schwartz reluctantly agreed to revive one of DC's Golden Age heroes.

"I said I didn't want to do the Flash," he recalled. "Everything was wrong about it. I didn't even like his uniform."

Given a free hand, he assigned his fellow editor and writer Robert Kanigher, to radically rework the speedster in collaboration with artists Carmine Infantino and Joe Kubert. The Silver Age Flash debuted in the fourth issue of **Showcase** *[see cover, right]*, a series DC had inaugurated to unveil new features and minimise the risk involved in launching them into their own comic.

Revolution begins

The streamlined, modernised Flash proved to be an instant hit. He moved into his own title in 1959, just a few months before Schwartz premiered a contemporary version of Green Lantern.

The editor next instigated a reworking of the Justice Society of America. The Justice League of America featured Schwartz's two Silver Age heroes alongside the preexisting J'onn J'onzz, Wonder Woman and Aquaman.

The team first appeared in 1960. It was the spark that ignited a revolution in comics. Undeterred that his company had no superhero titles at the time but envious of the JLA's success, Marvel publisher Martin Goodman asked Stan Lee to create a super group for him.

The result was the Fantastic Four. Created in partnership with Jack Kirby, it led to the Marvel Age of Comics, which established the then-struggling company as America's premiere comics publisher.

MARTIAL artists from three top fighting games are getting ready to rumble. Out to crack skulls and break bones are battlers from Street Fighter, King of Fighters *and* SNK vs Capcom, *who meet for a big brawl in ComicsOne's* **SVC Chaos**. *An adaptation of the SNK Corp/Capcom game of the same name, the 128-page graphic novel ships in April. It is priced $13.95.*

Quesada draws Father for Daredevil's 40th

MARVEL editor-in-chief Joe Quesada is to draw his first series in three years.

Quesada was responsible for the Kevin Smith-written 1998 relaunch of **Daredevil** which he illustrated with his Marvel Knights co-founder, Jimmy Palmiotti. His return to the drawing board reunites him with the blind superhero for a five-parter, which he is also writing.

Inked by **Ultimate X-Men**'s Danny Miki, **Daredevil: Father** is set during the deadliest heat wave in New York City history. With a serial killer on the loose, the city is being pushed beyond its breaking point.

"It is," Quesada told **CI**, "a huge mystery with implications to DD's future and past. It's also a story about fathers and sons, notably Matt's father and how even today his actions may somehow still be haunting Matt in more ways than even he's aware of."

Referring to drawing the series, Quesada, who is also writing Marvel's **NYX**, said, "I'm going back to my roots. I guess you can say that I'm bored or perhaps disappointed in current style and I'm looking to get back to drawing in a manner that use to make me happier. I'm leaning towards a simpler approach more akin to the work I used to do on **The Ray** than say my work on **Ash**."

Above: Joe Quesada and Danny Miki's cover art for the first issue of ***Father****, a five-issue celebration of Daredevil's debut in 1964.*

***Daredevil: Father** #1, priced $3.50, ships on April 28.*

Clone Wars begin

DARK Horse is making an addition to its line of **Star Wars** comics.

Kicking off with a 96-page volume, **Clone Wars Adventures** is packaged in the currently popular 5¼ x 7½" digest-sized or manga format. The title, a spin-off from *Clone Wars* – the Cartoon Network micro-series, which consisted of 20 3-minute episodes – is written by Haden Blackman.

The current writer of **Star Wars: Republic** and a key figure in the chronicling of the Clone Wars campaign, Blackman is a LucasArts producer and the creative force behind many of its ***Star Wars*** video games.

Discussing his approach to this particular period in the *Star Wars* saga, the writer said, "For me, it is really exciting to be telling stories in this era because it's so wide open. There aren't very many restrictions on us – except we can't kill Obi-Wan, but I came close... In all my stories, I've tried to reinforce the brutality of the war and the fact that Jedi aren't immortal, which has been really challenging but has resulted in some cool moments."

Above: Ben Caldwell's cover art for the 96-page first volume in Dark Horse's digest-sized ***Star Wars: Clone Wars Adventures*** *trade paperback series.*

Shipping on June 23, the $9.95 **Star Wars: Clone Wars Adventures** volume one features art from Ben Caldwell, author of Sterling's forthcoming **Action! Cartooning**, and **Poison Elves: Parantachin**'s Fillbach Brothers.

● Dark Horse has yet to decide on the frequency and content of future volumes in the series.

Firestorm returns

***Voltron** writer and former **Captain Marvel** artist team up to revive 1970s DC superhero*

WHEN a certain flame-headed DC hero re-emerges in his own title, it will not be the same the character who debuted in 1977's **Firestorm, the Nuclear Man** #1.

The new **Firestorm** series is written by **JSA: The Liberty Files**' Dan Jolley and drawn by ex-**Captain Marvel** artist ChrissCross and John (**Mystic**) Dell. It eliminates the long-established Ronnie Raymond alter ego in favour of a 17-year-old African-American named Jason Rusch. Echoing the original Raymond/Professor Martin Stein persona, Rusch is able to merge with whoever is in his immediate vicinity.

Pictured: ChrissCross cover art for issues 1 [above] *and 2* [top] *of DC's relaunched* ***Firestorm****.*

Discussing the new series, Jolley, who is also writing **Voltron** for Devil's Due, "The first arc is all about Jason's personal life – and a particularly bad decision he made, and how it's affected by his sudden, inexplicable transformation. It gets pretty deeply into Jason's character, as well as his new superheroic persona. By the end of issue one, readers will understand exactly who Jason is and where he's coming from; by the end of #2, they will have seen Firestorm-related things that they've never seen before, and in issue three I think we've got one of the more substantial 'Oh shit!' moments I have ever committed to paper."

As to whether characters from the earlier series will turn up, the writer said, "We will have a pretty healthy mix, I think, though I do foresee leaning more heavily toward the new; and rest assured, when the world realises there's a new guy behind the Firestorm wheel, Jason will be getting a lot of attention. And not much of it the good kind."

***Firestorm** #1, priced $2.50, ships on May 5.*

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Worst on way from Japan

DIGITAL Manga is coming out from under the Dark Horse umbrella.

The California-based organisation has released such titles as **Trigun** and **Helsing** under a co-publishing deal. It is now looking to establish its own identity.

Set for June, its first title under the Digital Manga imprint is to be **Ikebukaro West Gate Park**. Based on the Japanese live-action TV series of the same name, it is described as a hip urban saga.

The following month Digital Manga, which also packages a series of *How to draw Manga* books for Watson-Guptill, is launching its English language version of Hiroshi Takahashi's **Worst**.

The $12.95 series, was first published by Japan's Akita Shoten. It recounts the lives of a gang of teenage thugs who have to fight to gain respect.

Devil's Due expands its Kore concept

SINCE breaking away from Image to go solo, Devil's Due Productions has tended to concentrate on its licensed properties, which include **G.I. Joe**, **Micronauts** and **Voltron**, but is now looking to its own back catalogue for new titles.

In the pipeline is **Warstone: Abaddon Invades**. A 48-page one-shot, it is written by Joshua Blaylock. The Devil's Due president is joined on his sequel to 2003's Image-published **Kore** five-parter by artist Matt Cossin, a relative newcomer.

Although **Warstone** is set on the same world as the earlier mini, Blaylock is quick to point out the differences between the two titles. "This story focuses more on the pure concept that **Kore** revolved around – a Middle Earth, ***Dungeons and Dragons*** kind of fantastical world where suddenly, magic 'dried up,' and the various races populating the lands were forced to live together just like us. With that comes wars, political shifts, and changes it would entail.

"These beings know of Earth," Blaylock continued. "And rather than discuss alternative power sources for the now 'magicless' world, one leader, a decrepit ogre named Asmodeus, decides it's much easier to simply conquer us. Our bodies aren't naturally attuned to use magic like elves, ogres, and sprites.

"The 'UN' of Abaddon doesn't favour the invasion, but unless proof of a better alternative arises, they're not going to stop him," added the writer, who said it was up to Cerberus – a secret alliance of human mages and fantasy beings led by Dylan Forrester *[pictured]* – to do just that.

***Warstone: Abaddon Invades**, priced $4.95, ships in April.*

Robots rule New York

NYC Mech is set on a world very much like our own, Miles Gunter, co-writer of the Image series told **CI**.

"The key difference is that robots are the ruling species. But this isn't a post-apocalyptic future in which humankind has fallen under the heel of a mechanised revolt: Robots are simply the dominant life form here. In essence, they're us.

"With that being the case, **NYC Mech** is the story of New York, seen at first through the eyes of a girl trying to get ahead by any means possible," said Gunter, whose collaborators on the comic are **Terminator 3: Before the Rise** writer Ivan Brandon and a newcomer, artist Andy Macdonald. "It deals with the evolution of crime for her on a personal level, not for evil but for a personal vision of success."

Gunter, whose credits include **B.P.R.D.: The Soul of Venice**, said the main theme of **NYC Mech** is urban living. "We're doing all kinds of stories: crime, drama, comedy, romance, horror, documentary – everything."

Echoing that, Brandon said, "**NYC Mech** is a series for fans of just about everything. It's realism in the face of the New York day-to-day, through the eyes of robots dealing with the same problems we all have.

*Above: Dave Johnson's art for the cover to **NYC Mech** #1.*

It's about love and money and politics and crime and fast food. It's about metal hands that work, play and fight and big consequences when you least expect them."

In conclusion, Gunter added, "There's eight million different possibilities at any given time. Some characters will be recurring and others will only appear once. In New York you never know what to expect."

***NYC Mech** #1, priced $2.95, ships on April 14.*

Van Helsing leaps to comics

Above: Van Helsing *star Hugh Jackman as featured on the cover to Dark Horse's $2.99 spin-off from the movie.*

WHILE other publishers still clamour for licences to action figures and animated TV shows from the 1980s, Dark Horse continues to maintain its love affair with Hollywood's current output.

The Oregon-based **Star Wars** publisher has now acquired the rights to the movie which stars Wolverine actor Hugh Jackman in the monster hunting title role.

To kick off its tie-ins with Universal Pictures' **Van Helsing**, Dark Horse has brought in **The Demon: Driven Out**'s Joshua Dysart to script an introductory one-shot illustrated by J Alexander, creator of Sirius's **Empty Zone**.

Shipping on May 5, the $2.99 **Van Helsing** is set in Paris, where a horrifying creature – the result of a mad doctor's bizarre experiments – dwells in the shadows of the sewer system.

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In Brief

THOSE Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers creator Gilbert Shelton is to appear at the ICA in London's Mall on Friday, April 16.

He is there to celebrate the launch of **Comix: The Underground Revolution**. As a result of the cartoonist's involvement, the event has been upgraded from the 90-seater to the 150-seater theatre.

X-MEN director Bryan Singer and scriptwriters Dan Harris and Michael Dougherty are "to create a year's worth of **Ultimate X-Men** comics for Marvel and then will likely move to the third *X-Men* film at Fox."

There has been no official announcement from Marvel nor is there any indication as to when their stories are likely to run. **Ultimate X-Men** is currently written by David Mack, who took over with #51.

Harris and Dougherty produced the screenplay for *X2* in conjunction with *X-Men*'s David Hayter.

DC has a currently unscheduled follow up to its 2001 hardcover **Bizarro Comics** anthology in the pipeline.

MONGOOSE Publishing is moving into comics.

The Swindon-based publisher of such RPGs as ***Babylon 5***, ***Conan*** and ***Judge Dredd*** has acquired the rights to Robert Heinlein's **Starship Troopers**. It intends to produce not only role-playing and collectable miniatures games based on the novel, the 1997 movie and the animated TV series but graphic novels as well.

Mongoose is readying the first title under the new license – its ***Starship Troopers*** RPG – for pre-Christmas release.

Capitalising on the movie, Dark Horse published its own **Starship Trooper** comics during 1997 and 1998.

CMX IS the working name for a manga imprint in development from DC Comics. It is unknown whether the publisher intends to originate new material or license existing Japanese series.

Further details are awaited.

X-TREME X-Men is being cancelled as part of *Reload*, Marvel's forthcoming overhaul of its X-franchise.

The title ends in June with #46. Series writer Chris Claremont then moves over to its replacement, a relaunch of **Excalibur**, the title he co-created with artist Alan Davis.

The writer is also reuniting with Davis to take over **Uncanny X-Men** as part of the *Reload* revamp.

RELOAD also promises major changes to **Weapon X** but Marvel is keeping the lid on all details for the present.

*ALTHOUGH Golden Press's **Star Trek the Enterprise Logs** collected all bar two of the first 38 issues of Gold Key's **Star Trek** in 1976, the remainder of the 61-issue comic series has never been reprinted. That is set to change in May when Checker Books launches **The Key Collection** a line of trade paperbacks collecting the entire series, which ran from 1967 until 1979. The first 200-page volume [see cover above] is priced $22.95. It features contributions from Len Wein, George Kashdan, Nevio Zaccara and Alberto Giolitti.*

Dark Horse acquires US manga pioneer

WITH its profile as a major force in US manga publishing in jeopardy, Dark Horse is taking steps to strengthen its position in the face of overwhelming competition from such relative newcomers as TokyoPop and ComicsOne.

The **Lone Wolf and Cub** and **Blade of the Immortal** publisher is to purchase Studio Proteus, the manga translating and packaging house, which has been the force behind its Japan-originated output since the 1988 launch of its manga line.

Under the terms of deal, Dark Horse is also to acquire rights to all the manga Studio Proteus previously published through Eclipse and the now-collapsed Innovation.

Founded by **Dirty Pair** writer Toren Smith, after he first set up Viz with a co-publishing deal with Eclipse in 1986, Studio Proteus has been at the forefront of the manga invasion of America for almost 16 years. In that time it has been responsible for the US release of such titles as **Akira**, **Ghost in the Shell**, **Caravan Kidd** and **3 x 3 Eyes**.

Appleseed – its first English-language Japanese title – was launched through the now-defunct Eclipse in 1988. **Outlanders** followed from Dark Horse three months later.

*Above: The cover to the first volume of Dark Horse's series of trade paperbacks reprinting Masamune Shirow's **Appleseed**.*

Morrison brings in three for Vertigo

FRESH from his 40-issue run on Marvel's **New X-Men**, Grant Morrison is back at Vertigo, where he's signed on under a two-year exclusive.

Sticking with the super-hero genre, the writer is working with former **Catwoman** artist Cameron Stewart on **Seaguy**, the first of three planned miniseries.

Morrison – whose previous credits for DC's mature readers imprint include **The Invisibles** and **The Filth** – describes the three-parter as "the true antidote to your military-industrial realistic superheroes."

The series, which kicks off with a 40-page issue, is set in a world where evil has already been eliminated by the heroes of yesteryear. It follows its star and his best pal, a floating, talking fish named Chubby Da Choona — as they face such bizarre threats as a rigged chess match against a skeletal, seafaring personification of Death and the malevolent theme-park armies, which hunt them.

*Above: Cameron Stewart's cover art for the 40-page first issue of Vertigo's **Seaguy** three-parter.*

● **Vimanarama** is lined up to follow **Seaguy**. Another three-parter, it is drawn by Philip Bond.

Morrison refers to the unscheduled series as an Islamic sci-fi romance.

***Seaguy** #1, priced $2.95, ships on May 19.*

French spearhead graphic novel line

A MAINSTREAM book publisher is planning a foray into the burgeoning graphic novel market.

New York-based Harry N Abrams Inc is testing the water for its proposed line of hardcovers with two 12¼ x 8¾" titles, both by French creators.

Written by **In the Footsteps of Agatha Christie**'s Francois Riviere, the 88-page **Voyage into the Deep: The Saga of Jules Verne and Captain Nemo** is illustrated by newcomer Serge Micheli *[see art above]*.

It is an account of how Verne was inspired to write **20,000 Leagues under the Sea** after a strange journey that included an encounter with his best-known creation, the embittered submariner Captain Nemo.

Also running to 88-pages is **Auschwitz**. A black and white story, it took Pascal Croci five years to complete.

Another newcomer, the writer/artist spent a great deal of that time researching the Holocaust and interviewing survivors for his novel. It focuses on the experiences of a married couple, who lose their daughter during their years at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Both **Voyage into the Deep: The Saga of Jules Verne and Captain Nemo** and **Auschwitz** are published on April 1, priced $16.95.

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Witches convene at Dark Horse

WITH **B.P.R.D.: A Plague of Frogs** – his Guy Davis-drawn **Hellboy** spin-off – set to premiere on March 3, Mike Mignola is further exploring the world of the world's greatest paranormal investigator with a contribution to **The Dark Horse Book of Witchcraft**.

The 96-page hardcover, a companion to 2003's **Dark Horse Book of Hauntings**, features the writer/artist's *Hellboy* strip alongside Scott Morse's tale of old Salem, Evan Dorkin and Jill Thompson's reunion on a sequel to their *Strays* – from the earlier volume – and other stories.

Also included in the $14.95 anthology is a classic witch tale by Clark Ashton Smith. This is illustrated by Gary Gianni, who also provides the cover *[above]* to the book, which ships on June 23.

JLA faces Amazo's son

X-Statix *writer Peter Milligan returns to DC Universe with hardcover graphic novel introducing child of villain from 1960's* ***Brave & Bold*** *#30*

AS COULD be expected from such an innovative writer, Peter Milligan's latest paddle in the DC Universe pool is anything but a straightforward tale of superhero derring-do.

Better-known for 1993's **Shade the Changing Man**, **Human Target** and other such idiosyncratic Vertigo titles, Milligan has also written **Batman** and **Detective Comics**.

He is now tackling DC's premiere super-team in a 96-page graphic novel that pits the JLA against the son of one of their earliest foes.

Illustrated by **Daredevil: Ninja**'s Rob Haynes, the hardcover **JLA: Kid Amazo** *[see art, right]* features a villain who is a cyborg, a college student, a lapsed Catholic and a student of existential philosophy and Frederick Nietzsche.

"The story came pretty quickly," explained Milligan, "the idea of a second generation Amazo, a character who not only has the powers of the entire JLA, but is more than his father – a character who can test the JLA in terms of their powers, but also what they are as a team in a way the father could not."

JLA: Kid Amazo *hardcover, priced $24.95, ships on May 5.*

Viz sets date for steamy romance

SHOPPERS in US bookstores seem to have an incredible appetite for manga, one that still shows no signs of being satiated.

To feed their demand, American publishers are scrutinising their Japanese sources in a search for new and different material.

Japan offers a wealth of manga in a multitude of genres, an aspect that is only now being mined by such companies as Viz, which has just acquired US-only rights to a romance and a sports title.

First up is Shinju Mayu's **Kaikan Phrase** *[see cover left]* which Viz is releasing as **Sensual Phrase**. Described as the manga equivalent of a romance novel, the $9.95 black and white series, which first appeared in the often steamy **Sho-Comi** anthology, debuts in March.

● Lined up for April is **The Prince of Tennis**. Written by Konomi Takeshi, this was serialised in **Shonen Jump**.

Above: An Aleksi Briclot interior page from ***Spawn: Simony****, a 64-page Image/Todd McFarlane Productions one-shot. The $7.95 comic is written by Alex Nikolavitch from a plot by Semic's Jeff Porcherot.*

French Spawn arrives

WITH its core **Spawn** title running almost a year late, Todd McFarlane Productions has turned to its French licensee for fresh material.

Semic is the beneficiary of a unique deal, which makes it the first organisation other than McFarlane's to originate a story of the supernatural antihero.

The result, *Simony*, ran across two issues of the Paris-based publisher's **Spawn** reprint series. A 48-page tale painted by Aleksi Briclot, it focuses on Cogliostro as the current Spawn mentor schemes to rid himself of the Hellspawn curse.

Image is to release an English-language version of *Simony* in a 64-page one-shot in May. It also includes pin-ups and what is described as other editorial content.

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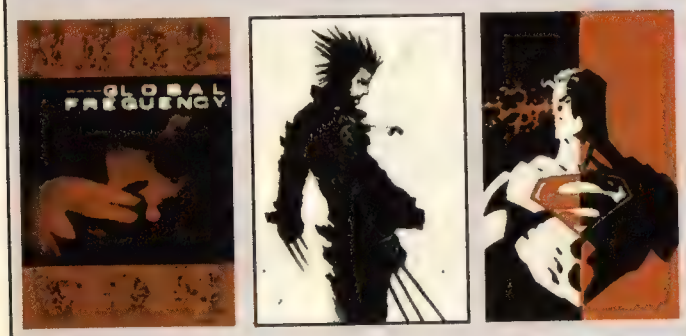

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CrossGen preps Pérez crossover

LADY Death's 10th anniversary is being celebrated not only with a new series – the recently-launched **Wild Hunt** – but also a crossover that brings Brian Pulido's white-skinned human-Eldritch hybrid heroine into contact with one of CrossGen's sigil-bearing female warriors.

A standalone mini, the two-issue **Sojourn/Lady Death** is pencilled by George Pérez, fresh from his hugely-successful collaboration with writer Kurt Busiek on **Avengers/JLA**. The long-awaited Marvel/DC co-production has been the biggest hit to date in the career of the artist, who this year celebrates 30 years in the business.

Medieval fantasies

The two-parter is written by Pulido and **El Cazador**'s Chuck Dixon, who told **CI** the concept seemed a natural to him. "Two medieval fantasies with female leads and both under the CrossGen banner. A crossover without the legal hassles."

Asked what difficulties he had encountered in bringing together two heroines from two very different milieus, the writer – soon to launch **Richard Dragon** with artist Scott McDaniel through DC – commented, "The differences are what make a crossover work. The ladies contrast more than resemble one another. Very different motivations."

As to the basic premise of the crossover, Dixon was even more unusually taciturn. "They meet. They fight. They make the bad guy who brought them together very, very sorry."

Booty kicking

That bad guy is **Sojourn**'s Mordath. Still seeking any means to rid himself of the bow-wielding Arwyn, he reaches across time and space in search of a champion to do battle for him. He snares Lady Death.

Regarding any effect the crossover might have on the heroines' own titles, CrossGen's Bill Rosemann proclaimed, "This ain't no **What If...?** or *Elseworlds*, my friends - this is the real deal: the actual Arwyn from **Sojourn** and the same Lady Death that's kicking booty in her own medieval mag. Will this impact on their respective comicbooks after the smoke clears? That's up to their individual creative teams to decide, but I wouldn't put it past either to have some long-lasting effects from the meeting continue forward."

***Sojourn/Lady Death** #1, priced $2.99, ships on May 14.*

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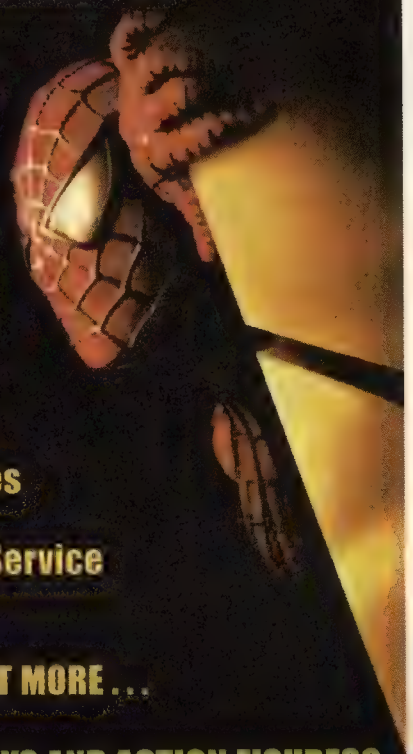

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Strykeforce in comeback bid

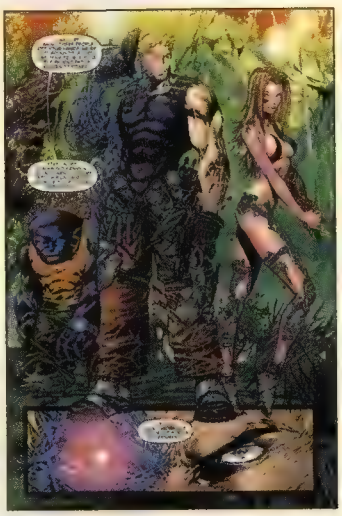
NOBLE CAUSES' Jay Faerber is spearheading the move to resurrect a spin-off from one of Image's earliest success stories.

Launched into its own title in 1994, **Codename: Strykeforce** is an offshoot from Cyberforce, the team Top Cow head honcho Marc Silvestri introduced two years earlier.

Unseen since 1995, the band of mercenaries led by the cybernetically-enhanced Stryker are being revived by Faerber in the now-truncated **Strykeforce**. The ongoing series is illustrated by **Legacy of Kain: Defiance**'s Tyler Kirkham and Marlo (**Teen Titans**) Alquiza.

"**Strykeforce** is about a group of superhumans who are wanted fugitives," Faerber, who has also written **New Warriors** and **Teen Titans** told **CI**. "So they're on the run, and they hire themselves out for various dangerous missions. They'll rescue kidnapped CEOs, they'll help free the son of a congressman from a supernatural cult, they'll help smoke out a telepath engaged in corporate espionage. You name it, they'll do it – provided the price is right, of course."

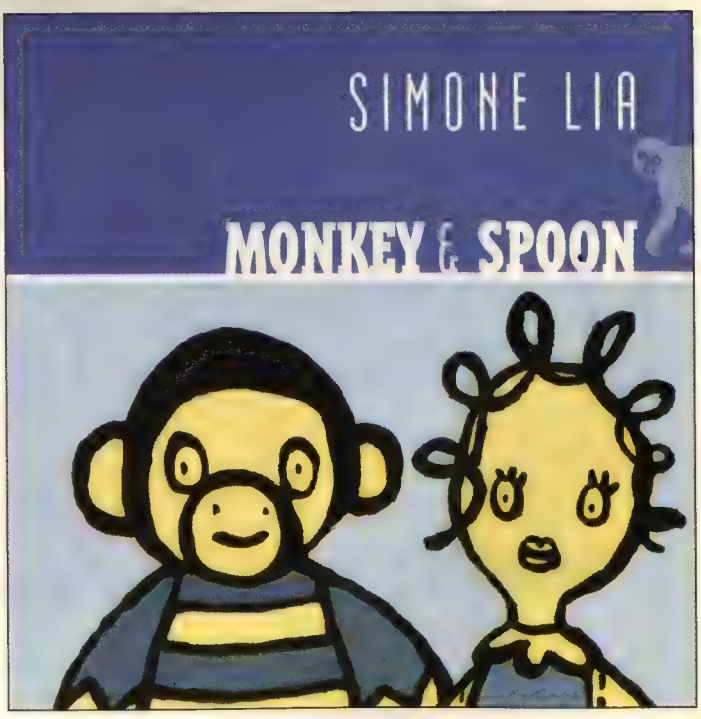
The writer said there are only two holdovers from the team's original incarnation. "Stryker's the cybernetic leader of the group; a no-nonsense former Special Forces officer. He'd never tell one of his crew to do something he wouldn't do himself. He's the kind of leader who isn't afraid to roll up his sleeves and get his hands – all four of them – dirty.



*Above: An interior page from the first issue of Image/Top Cow's **Strykeforce**; art by Tyler Kirkham and Marlo Alquiza.*

"The other is Anvil, a little guy, who happens to have dark blue skin, and is incredibly strong and heavy. He's also next to impossible to hurt, and he hangs out with Strykeforce mainly for the buzz. To him, each mission is another opportunity for him to get an adrenaline rush."

***Strykeforce** #1, priced $2.99, ships April.*



*SIMONE Lia's **Monkey & Spoon** is the second in Adhouse Books' occasional series of 'animalia novella'. In it, Lia – a writer/illustrator of children's books and co-founder of Cabanon Press – explores the relationship of a married anthropomorphic couple. Printed with one spot colour, the 112-page softcover ponders whether a monkey can love a spoon and vice versa. The London-based cartoonist's 6 x 6" volume, which follows Scott Morse's **Southpaw** [2003], is priced $9.95. It ships in May.*

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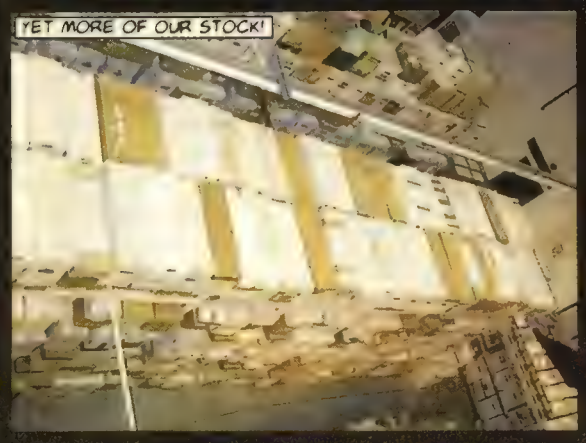

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PREVIEW: Jim Lee's Superman

OWNING internationally-recognisable contemporary icons is no longer a license to print money.

Characters like Tarzan, Sherlock Holmes and Fu Manchu are known the world over, but invariably fail as comics titles. Such is DC's lot with three of the industry's most-revered heroes, Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman. All have been in print for over 60 years, and all became poor sellers, plunging well below 50,000 sales, while such recent usurpers as Marvel's Ultimates line have achieved twice their sales.

With writer Jeph Loeb, WildStorm wunderkind Jim Lee saved **Batman** by adding over 100,000 monthly buyers to the title. Now, with cult favourite writer Brian (**100 Bullets**) Azzarello, he is looking to do the same for **Superman**, currently at under 35,000 sales, as he takes over with the April shipping #204.

Shades of Super Powers

IN AN almost direct replay of its **Super Powers** series, DC is to release a five-parter based around a licensed line of action figures.

Published between 1984 and 1986, the three earlier minis were based on Kenner toys while **Batman: Cyber Revolution** is a tie-in with Mattel's forthcoming series.

*Above: Kirby-esque cover art for the first issue of DC's **Batman: Cyber Revolution** five-parter; by Michael Golden.*

The comic is written by DC manager Ron Perazza and drawn by the **Robin** art team of Francisco Rodriguez de la Fuente and Aaron Sowd.

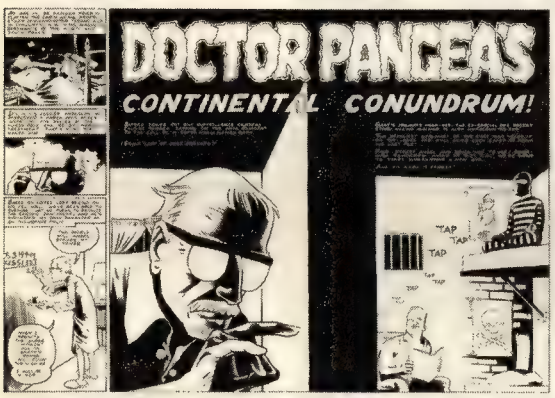
Set in the not-too-distant future, **Cyber Revolution** follows Batman, Nightwing, Robin, Oracle and Black Canary as they struggle to stop the Joker implementing a computer virus designed to reshape the world to suit his warped sensibilities.

Ranged against them are nightmarish robotic versions of the Dark Knight's rogues gallery. But something even more terrifying is lurking 800 years further into the future.

● Kenner issued three series of its ***Super Powers*** action figure line, one each year from 1984-86.

DC promoted each one with its own tie-in miniseries. The first two were drawn by Jack Kirby, the third by Carmine Infantino.

***Batman: Cyber Revolution** #1, priced $2.95, ships on May 26.*



Street Angel emerges at SLG

FORMER mini-comics creators Jim Rugg and Brian Maruca have teamed up to produce **Street Angel**, Slave Labor Graphics' newest black and white ongoing series.

Talking with **CI** about the quarterly 24-page title, Rugg first described it as "homeless skateboarding girl kicks ass" before saying it was a cross between *Wet, Hot American Summer* and *Kids* with Batman thrown in.

Maruca, who co-writes the series with Rugg, said, "I would call it goosing a tired cliché. We're superhero friendly, but we see what we think are deficiencies in the genre. We also tend to think that we're indie-friendly."

"The comic stars Jesse Sanchez, a gifted 13-year-old skateboarder and martial artist," added Rugg. "Those skills make her Street Angel, the most feared force for good in the ghetto. She's the only ray of hope in a terrible place. And like any resource, she gets exploited."

***Street Angel** #1, priced $2.95, ships in March.*

NO! THAT WORD... EXTER-MINATE!
WHAT IS IT DOCTOR?
THE WORST NEWS POSSIBLE! YOU'RE DEALING WITH THE MOST EVIL RACE I HAVE EVER ENCOUNTERED
...THE DALEKS!
EXTERMINATE!

*APPARENTLY not content with expanding into DC territory with its recently-launched **Batman: Legends**, Kent-based Panini is developing its own line of graphic novels. Recycling in-house material, the former Marvel UK's first A4 title reprints stories from the earliest issues of **Doctor Who Weekly**. Drawn by Dave Gibbons* [see art above], *the 164-page **Doctor Who: The Iron Legion** features the black and white adventures of the fourth Doctor (Tom Baker) written by the team of John Wagner and Pat Mills plus Steve Moore. The $24.95/£14.99 softcover is published in March. A second volume, **Doctor Who: Dragon's Claw** is lined up to follow.*

Vertigo reassembles DCU mechanicals

POSSIBLY making a move on Marvel Knights territory, DC is resurrecting Professor Emil Hamilton, Automan, Rosie the Riveter, Ford, Brainstorm and Doctor Cyber for a superhero title being published under its mature readers imprint.

Given a Vertigo-style makeover by Joe (**Action Comics**) Kelly and artist Ted McKeever, whose credits include **Metropol** and **Toxic Gumbo**, the DC Universe obscurities are being brought together in the eight-issue **Enginehead**.

Introduced in comics as diverse as the 1965 issue of **Tales of the Unexpected** and 1994s **S.T.A.R. Corps** miniseries, the six partially-mechanical heroes literally combine forces. Together they become Enginehead, the ultimate mechanic, which takes up residence in Irontown, a new DCU locale.

*Above: Ted McKeever cover art for the second issue of Vertigo's eight-issue **Enginehead**.*

Described as a 'heavy metal real-time mechanical', the newest anti-hero and techno-gothic creation was built by its creator as a tool to further a noble plan.

***Enginehead** #1, priced $2.50, ships on April 7.*

Marvel UK artist dies

ART Wetherell passed away prematurely over Christmas at the age of 42. He died from complications arising from a stomach ulcer.

His US work was published through Dark Horse, Fox Kids and London Night Studios. As well as contributing to many Marvel UK titles including **Incredible Hulk Presents** and **Transformers**, he also drew adult comics.

In Brief

A LONG-established London comics store and one of America's most progressive indie publishers are joining forces to present UK Web Comix Thing 2004.

Organised by retailer Gosh Comics and the US's Alternative Comics, the event is intended to highlight the web and mini-comics industry in the UK. Described as a Small Press Expo of sorts, it is to feature exhibitors from the web, independent, alternative and underground communities.

The convention is to be held at The Octagon in Mile End Road, Stepney, London on March 20 from 9.00am to 6.00pm. Admission is £4.

For further details log on to: www.ukwebcomixthing.co.uk

THE PLUG has been pulled on **Elektra**. The Marvel Knights title is being cancelled with the April shipping #35.

GAIL Simone is to script a four-issue **Legion** serial.

The **Birds of Prey** writer is following the DnA team of Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning, who leave the $2.50 DC title with the June-shipping #34. Dan Jurgens and Andy Smith are drawing Simone's story, which runs through July and August.

THE Collected Hedge Knight is now available through Devil's Due, the new home of Dabel Brothers Productions – formerly known as Roaring Studios.

Written by Ben Avery and drawn by Mike S Miller and Mike Crowell, the $8.95 80-pager collects issues #1-3 of the six-part adaptation of fantasy author George R R Martin's prelude to his **A Song of Fire and Ice** series.

The first two chapters were published by Image in 2003 but the third episode has yet to appear. The final three instalments are to be published by Devil's Due from #4 as soon as Image releases the apparently unscheduled #3.

AFTER writing, pencilling and inking comes colouring and lettering...

Written by Mark Chiarello and Todd Klein, the fourth volume in the Watson-Guptill series, **The DC Comics Guide to Coloring and Lettering Comics** is published in August.

The 128-page 7½ x 10" softcover is priced $19.95.

JASON Cobley is cancelling his anthropomorphic **Bulldog Adventure Magazine**. The imminent issue #27 is the last in the current A4 format.

The self-published black and white magazine is to be replaced by **Bulldog: Empire**. A US comicbook format miniseries, this is drawn by Neil Cameron, a regular **BAM** contributor.

*LARRY Young is celebrating AiT/Planet Lar's fifth anniversary with the release of **Planet of the Capes**. The publisher-cum-writer's own take on the superhero genre, the 88-pager brings the greatest heroes of another world to our Earth, where superheroes are merely comicbook characters. Illustrated by **Switchblade Honey's**, Brandon McKinney, the $12.95 softcover ships in April.*

One less idiot in MAD's usual gang

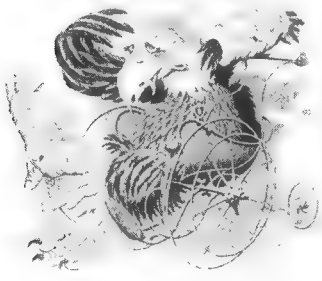
George Woodbridge died from emphysema on January 23. He was 73.

One of the 'gang of idiots' who worked on **MAD Magazine**, the native New Yorker was born in 1930. He attended the School of Visual Arts alongside Angelo Torres and current **MAD** editor Nick Meglin. Together with EC luminaries Al Williamson and Frank Frazetta, the group was dubbed the Fleagle Gang by Harvey Kurtzman.

Woodbridge also worked for Timely – now Marvel – and other comics publishers. He began contributing to **MAD** in 1957.

His most famous contribution to the humour title was *43-Man Squamish* – a cartoon guide to an absurd field game played with ridiculous implements and hilariously convoluted rules, which appeared in 1965. A keen historian, he also illustrated several books on US military history.

Woodbridge is survived by three children and by his second wife, Deborah.



*Above: 1991 George Woodbridge art, from **MAD Magazine** #301.*

Eisner's Law returns

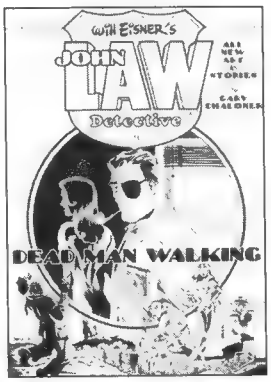
*IDW to publish collection of Australian's on-line resurrection of **Spirit** creator's one-eyed cop*

A WRITER/artist relatively unknown outside his native Australia has been authorised by Will Eisner to resurrect a character The Spirit creator abandoned in 1948.

The man behind such titles as **The Jackaroo** and **The Southern Squadron,** Gary Chaloner has been chronicling the adventures of John Law at *ModernTales.com* since June 2002.

Discussing his approach to the pipe-smoking, one-eyed detective, Chaloner told **CI**, "We've started from scratch really, building the main characters, supporting cast and the city of Crossroads from the ground up, using the basics established by Will back in the '40s. I've introduced quite a few new characters to the series as well.

"The earlier stories Will produced featuring Law were eventually used as *Spirit* stories, so the characters have a muddy past that needed to be cleaned up," he added. "Will was quite adamant that he wanted the character moved away from any resemblance to Denny Colt and *The Spirit* series.



"The new stories do have familiar elements: corrupt cops, gangsters, sexy femme fatales and movie stars, corrupt winners and desperate losers... but mainly the series is about friendship and the things one man has to do to survive and stay true to himself in a dishonest town," said Chaloner. "Hopefully the mix will make for entertaining and human stories with a few surprises thrown in from left field."

THE CHIEF HAD BEEN HANDLING THIS CASE PERSONALLY.
BRENDA BANKS KIDNAPPED
IT WAS ALL VERY LOW KEY, AT THE FAMILY'S REQUEST.
BUT SOMEONE CLOSE TO THE BANKS HAD LEAKED EVERYTHING TO THE PRESS.
..AND THESE VULTURES KNOW HOW A STORY LIKE THIS CAN END...
..WITH A COLD BODY AND A HOT FRONT PAGE STORY
SO NOW IT'S MY CASE.
CHIEF GUNYAN AND HIS WIFE WERE CLOSE FRIENDS OF THE FAMILY
HE WAS THE ONE WHO INTRODUCED ME TO BRENDA AND... WELL... WHILE THE CHIEF HAD STAYED CLOSE FRIENDS WITH THE BANKS, I... HADN'T.
JOHN! THANKS FOR COMING, BOYO
SO THIS WAS GOING TO BE TOUGH.

A MOMENT LAD, BEFORE WE GO IN... JOHN, HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF...LADY LUCK?
YOU MEAN, BESIDES THOSE MOVIES BRENDA MAKES?
AREN'T THEY BASED ON SOME VIGILANTE THAT OPERATED DURING THE WAR?
THAT'S THE ONE
HERE, READ THIS...
IT ARRIVED FOUR DAYS AGO
LADY LUCK

Recycled Law

IDW is to collect Chaloner's black and white on-line strips in its 128-page **John Law** trade paperback.

The compilation, subtitled **Dead Man Walking**, also includes the three stories Eisner wrote and drew for his aborted **John Law** comic. Subsequently recycled for *The Spirit*, these eventually saw print in Eclipse's 1981 **John Law, Detective** one-shot.

● A comics professional since 1982, Chaloner was editor of **Dark Horse Down Under** [1994]. Among his other US credits are **Planet of the Apes: Urchak's Folly** and **The Olympians** [both 1991].

***John Law: Dead Man Walking** trade paperback, priced $19.99, ships in June*

CI #167 Matrix Comics competition winners

IN **CI** #167, 15 readers were offered the opportunity to each win a copy of Titans Books' new collection, **The Matrix Comics**. The lucky winners were:

M. Badham-Moore, Lincs
Keith Barratt, Wakefield
Nigel Burrough, Bristol
Peter Clark, Egham
Steve Cook, Croesyceiliog
Simon Curtis, Launceston
Pantelis Georgiou, Camb.
Elli Graham, London
Dean Hazell, Bristol
Thomas Hughes, B'ham
John Joshua, London
Neil Llewellyn, Aldershot
G. Morgan, Stoke-on-Trent
Andrew Salter, New Tredegar
Dave Fieldwalker, E. Knoyle

Reader votes scored the 15 most popular sections of the issue as:

1 *News International* (24.2%)
2 *Reviews* (12.1%)
3 *Advance Listings* (6.6%)
4 *NetWorks* (6.2%)
5 *Letters/Comic Cuts* (5.8%)
6 *Sez Dez* (5.2%)
7 *Q&A* (5.0%)
8 *Frame to Frame* (4.8%)
9= *Comment* (4.7%)
Matrix competition (4.7%)
11 *Lying In The Gutter* (4.5%)
12= *Novel Graphics* (3.8%)
Talking Shop (3.8%)
14 *Biff's Illuminations* (3.7%)
15 *Directory* (1.7%)

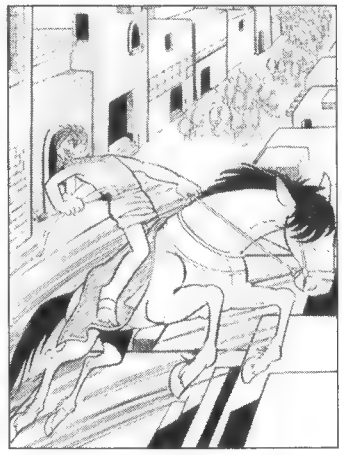
The highest scoring section as the least popular feature was "None, they're all fine" – very encouraging at 22%, with *Novel Graphics* second at 11% and *Networks*, *Directory*, *Frame to Frame* and *Talking Shop* all joint third at 9.5%.

Godfather to Buddha

THE LATEST work of Manga legend, Osamu Tezuka, to be translated into the English language is **Buddha**, an epic tale charting the life of the Blessed One. Told over eight volumes, the story introduces original characters – slave Chapra and pariah Tatta – and weaves them into ancient Indian lore to create a humorous and moving tale.

Tezuka, the proclaimed godfather of Manga, was also responsible for creating **Astro Boy** (currently being reprinted by Dark Horse), **Phoenix** and **Black Jack**, and is widely acknowledged with making Manga accessible to an adult audience. "**Buddha** appeared in Tezuka's later period, when he was already at the height of his powers," said Micah Burch of Vertical – the US publisher releasing the series.

Distributed by Turnaround in the UK, **Buddha Vol. 1: Kapilavastu** and **Vol. 2: The Four Encounters** are currently available, while three



and four are set for release in April and June respectively. The remaining four volumes will be published in late 2004 and early 2005.

With a cover price of $24.95 each, the full saga will prove to be a costly but enlightened journey.

Marvel Enterprise settles $1.5m suit

BRIAN Hibbs, store owner of Comix Experience, California, recently won an initial settlement in his class-action lawsuit against Marvel Comics Group's parent company, Marvel Enterprise Ltd.

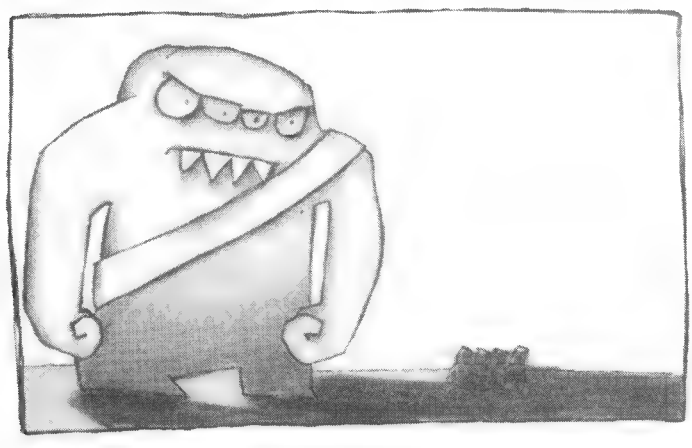
The suit, filed in May 2002, alleged that since 1992, Marvel had failed to designate anything up to $8 million worth of comics as returnable and had willfully violated its own terms of sale, specifically regarding comics that shipped more than 30 days after the solicited on-sale date. It also referred to comics shipped with contents significantly different from those described in the solicitations.

Hibbs stated, "The lists that have been agreed to, involve in excess of 150 separate titles, so, if the settlement is approved and if 100% of retailers claim 100% of the possible credit, I'm estimating that something just north of $1.5 million in credit will be put back in the hands of comicbook retailers."

Once finalised, anyone participating in the settlement will not be required to return any comics in order to receive payments. Marvel will issue credit to retailers based on percentages of the original purchase price of their store stock.

"There was absolutely no reason this ever had to get to this point," Hibbs mused. "We could've resolved this all a year ago amicably, but they weren't interested then."

Marvel declined to comment.



*KID Koala's latest comic, **Some Of My Best Friends Are DJs**, is included free with his new CD of the same title. Like his previous work, **Nufonia Must Fall**, the Montreal-based artist tells tales of love, loss and kung-fu. For more info check* www.kidkoala.com.

CUT OUT COUPON ALONG DOTTED LINE

*To celebrate the April launch of Quality's first book after 27 years as an award-winning magazine publisher, 10 copies of the 288 page full colour hardback **Comix: The Underground Revolution** are being offered to **CI** readers.*

To enter, simply choose the correct answer to the following question:

Quality began life as Starburst Magazines Ltd. What was the company's first publication?

a) Comics International
b) Warrior
c) Starburst

Name: _____
(Please print)

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The winners will be selected and announced in Comics International #171

Please also complete the following:
My five favourite features this issue are (please mark in order as *1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th* – no ticks):

___ NEWS INTERNATIONAL	___ IN THE GUTTER
___ SEZ DEZ	___ NETWORKS
___ HELLBOY FEATURE	___ COMICS ECONOMICS
___ SUPERMAN PREVIEW	___ Q AND A
___ TALKING SHOP	___ REVIEWS
___ NOVEL GRAPHICS	___ LETTERS/COMIC CUTS
___ FRAME TO FRAME	___ EVENTS GUIDE
___ PANEL BEATERS	___ ADVERTISEMENTS
___ BIFF'S ILLUMINATIONS	___ COMPETITION
___ ADVANCE LISTINGS	___ DIRECTORY

PLUS... which of the above is your LEAST favourite, the one you skipped reading, the one you wish we'd replace with a new contender for the top spot:

_____

Send this form (sorry, no faxes, copies or e-mails) to:

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COMIX
Nice!

Swamp Thing co-creator to give DC creature second chance at movie success

Mike Conroy's Frame to Frame

Charting the latest news between films and comics

SCREEN adapatations of comics didn't fare too well in 1982. TV dished up Glynis (*Dempsey & Makepeace*) Barber as the **Daily Mirror**'s *Jane* flirting her way through 10 episodes of her short-lived show and Anna Turkel starred in a failed pilot for a *Modesty Blaise* series. However, the only big screen outing was for Len Wein and Berni Wrightson's **Swamp Thing**.

When the moss-encrusted muck monster lumbered into cinemas, it was hard to believe that the previous year had seen Superman fly into movie theatres for the second time in two years. With Richard Lester at the helm, *Superman II* wasn't quite as good as its predecessor but it was light years ahead of *Swamp Thing*.

Despite being written and directed by horror-meister Wes Craven, it was a bomb. *Swamp Thing*'s only saving grace was that it was easy to be distracted from stuntman Dick Durock wandering through the swamp in a blatantly rubber suit by sightings of Adrienne Barbeau's breasts, which were patently allowed to roam free.

Notwithstanding *Swamp Thing*'s a) lack of box office success and b) total lack of cinematically redeeming features, an even worse sequel was released in 1989. Craven and Barbeau-less, it was followed in 1990 by a 72-episode cable TV series.

None of these – which also included an animated, five-part Kenner tie-in that shuffled quietly onto TV screens in 1992 – added anything to the short lived franchise which had been re-ignited by Alan Moore's arrival on the comic in 1984, and was still doing well in the 1990s.

If anything, the memory of these travesties probably kept interested producers at bay. But now, almost a decade-and-a-half on, the situation has changed.

The Matrix producer Joel Silver has acquired the rights to the DC property and has brought in **Swamp Thing** co-creator Len Wein to script the movie.

The writer, who is not overly-critical of the original film, said, "It's a horror movie. The new *Man-Thing* movie sounds just like what the old *Swamp Thing* was. I think it has a budget of $5 million. *Swamp Thing* has a budget of way beyond that. When I had my first meeting with Joel the first thing he said was 'No guy in a rubber suit.' *Swamp Thing* will be all CGI."

When Things compete

In view of Lion's Gate/Artisan Entertainment's forthcoming *Man-Thing* flick, the timing of the Silver Pictures project is rather interesting.

However, given Wein's remarks, the producers don't appear overly concerned by the possible competition. They are obviously expecting *Man-Thing* – which has been pushed back from its August 27 release date till sometime in October to tie-in with Halloween – to flop. But they really shouldn't ignore the pigeonhole factor as audiences have long memories, and if one muck monster movie stinks...

Marvel, Maisel, movies

On the subject of *Man-Thing* or rather Marvel movies in general, Marvel Studios has hired itself a new head in the shape of David Maisel.

Reporting to chairman and chief executive officer Avi Arad, Maisel has been appointed president and chief operating officer. A 15-year entertainment industry veteran, he has worked at Creative Artists Agency, Walt Disney and Livent, a theatrical production company.

With Arad talking about Marvel-developed projects, Maisel's appointment could suggest Marvel is trying to move away from outside producers, who instigate and finance Marvel projects in return for a lion's share of the profits. The downside of bringing production in-house is that much greater risks are involved.

Back at X-hadhair's school
Professor! Are you hacking into Magneto's main computer system to learn his evil plan?
No. I'm downloading nude pictures of Mystique off the internet. They don't call me Professor X for nothing!!
Birum teaches a class of young mutants
And that students is the fastest way to flee the scene of a hit-and-run accident! Any questions?
Yeah. What's the deal with the white wig? You look like Siegfried and Roy!
Are you my Mommy?
I don't like you Kitty Kat! You don't play well with other mutants and you run with scissors!
Don't make me give you the "finger," Cyclops!
Professor, of all the students here are mutants who gets picked on?
Jimmy the frozen human kid!
Ha Ha Jimmy's not a freak!
Look at him! He's so normal!
Jimmy's a Homo sapien!!
If you're gonna join the team, we'll have to get you a tight leather costume!
It's what all the comic book heroes wear when they make it onto the movies!
Later in Kitty Kat's room
Wake up! You're having a bad dream. Wake up right now! Or I'm stuck here!
Sorry babe! Guess I'm not what you'd call a "morning person."

IT'S THE circle of life... from comics to film to comics to film.... Shown above is a page of the **X-Men** *movie parody from* **Cracked**, **MAD Magazine***'s number one competitor and the latest humour title to be picked up by Hollywood.* **National Lampoon**, **MAD** *and now* **Cracked** *– where will it all end? In tears, probably. Left: Swamp Thing as depicted by Scott Eaton and Kim DeMulder in 1992. Below:* ***Batman Adventures*** *art by Ty Templeton and Rick Burchett from 1993.*

Marvel may be looking for a larger slice of the cake but option money and rights fees are pretty much guaranteed. Allowing outside companies to develop its properties, Marvel gets money up front, regardless of whether a movie goes into production, let alone if it proves profitable. So a less risky route than production would be to negotiate tougher contracts with better profits.

Capitalist confusion

Interestingly, the Marvel press release announcing Maisel's appointment also states "Marvel Studios' mission is to maximise the financial and creative success..."

That is a given for any commercial enterprise but it leaves you wondering why they felt the need to put it in print.

Maybe because the company's previous owners didn't appreciate the underlying ethos of a capitalist society and that's why Marvel ended up in Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Young Dark Knight

The Batman is the latest in a line of Warner Bros. cartoons, featuring the Dark Knight, stretching back to 1992s ground breaking *Batman: The Animated Series*.

The difference this time round is that the show is set during year three of his career. The 20-something Batman will encounter such classic Bat-Villains as the Joker, Penguin, Catwoman, Mr Freeze, Riddler and Man-Bat.

The series, which is to air on Kids WB! and the Cartoon Network, will also feature Gina Gershon as the voice of Catwoman.

History of Violence

Just as *F2F* is going to press, news has reached us that David Cronenberg has signed on to direct John Wagner and Vince Locke's **A History of Violence** [1997]. The *Crash* director is working with New Line Cinema to adapt the Paradox Press *Graphic Mystery* title.

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The flipside of manga

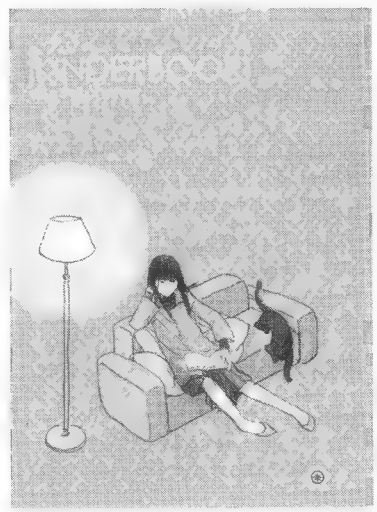
Novel Graphics by Paul Gravett

Highlighting the latest and best in graphic novels

HARD to believe it's been 15 years since Katsuhiro Otomo's pumped-up, post-apocalyptic animated movie *Akira* ignited many Westerners' passion for Japanese comics and animation.

Since then, despite the escalation of manga into graphic novels and anime onto video and DVD, the popularly-held misconception persists in the West that there is a standard 'manga style' – big eyes, big robots, big tits and tentacles, ultra-cute and ultra-violent.

In the film *Lost in Translation*, Bill Murray's culture shocks include seeing Tokyo commuters, young and old, absorbed in manga. In fact, these account for over 40% of all publications sold in Japan and are too huge a cultural phenomenon to be reduced to a set of clichés or a single genre. There have almost always been many other sides to modern Japanese comics and fortunately some of this less 'orthodox' output is starting to appear in English.



Above: Kan Takahama's cover to her anthology, ***Kinderbook.***

During the traumatic recovery after World War Two, Japanese children escaped into Osamu Tezuka's Disney-inspired manga as the perfect pre-TV entertainment. Manga books were pricey, so people took to hiring them from pay libraries. It was through demands from their older customers that a very different strain of much darker, more socially engaged comics developed, inspired by new realist cinema and literature.

Yoshihiro Tatsumi was 19 when he broke into this market. Two years later he helped set up the pivotal magazine **Kage** [Shadow]. Eager to distinguish what he and his colleagues were producing from the sweeter, more kid-oriented manga, Tatsumi coined the term *gekiga* [dramatic pictures] in 1957. Founder and master of the form, he was not afraid to use his short story comics to confront the problems plaguing Japanese society: a father preys on his prostitute daughter for money; a wife stifled by her husband and mother-in-law tries to escape from her marriage; an unmarried mother is pressured by her selfish boyfriend to abort their baby into the sewers. Tatsumi's frank, unsentimental exposés and compelling realism made his manga some of the first to be put into English in 1987s **Goodbye**.

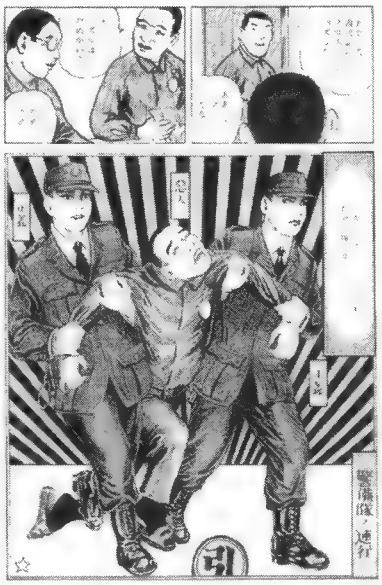
This year, Tatsumi looks set to be discovered all over again with a sample in the new **Drawn & Quarterly** Vol. 5 and his complete works to follow in a series edited by Japanese-American cartoonist Adrian Tomine (www.drawnandquarterly.com).

Yoshiharu Tsuge is another *gekiga* artist who started in the Fifties. An intensely shy teenager, for him creating comics alone at home was a way to earn some cash and avoid dealing with others. But when his commissions dried up, Tsuge became so poor he had to sell his blood and so depressed that he could not draw, and attempted suicide. What literally saved him was an offer to experiment freely in the unconventional magazine **Garo**, founded in 1964.

One of the results is his landmark *Nejishiki* [*Screw-*

Style], translated in **The Comics Journal** #250 (www.tcj.com). Tsuge's short fever-dream fable still quivers with surreal symbolism. Staring as if in shock, a shirtless boy walks ashore bleeding from a jellyfish sting on his right arm. The boy's search for a doctor takes bizarre detours. Finally, while having sex with a gynaecologist his wound is fitted with a mechanical screw. Whatever its meanings to Tsuge, or to Japanese readers adrift in the social turmoil of 1968, *Screw-Style* remains timeless in its exposure of the raw nerve of alienation. Tsuge has not drawn manga since 1987, but – like a Japanese Robert Crumb – his relatively few stories are revered as treasures and constantly reprinted, analysed and adapted for TV and film.

To this day, **Garo** has continued to play a vital role in unearthing unique creators. Discovered in 1971, Kazuichi Hanawa acquired a cult following for his extra-ordinary rewritings of Japan's past, interweaving historical facts and hysterical fantasies. In December 1994, Hanawa was arrested for owning replica firearms and antique weapons. Japan's gun controls are notoriously strict and, despite a national letter-writing campaign, he was given a prison sentence; nothing more was heard from him for three years.



Above: Kazuichi Hanawa's powerful auto-biographical prison story, ***Doing Time.***

While inside, Hanawa attempted to keep his sanity by recording the mind-numbing rules and routines that regimented every second. Make too much noise and you lose your TV privileges; break a trivial regulation, such as smuggling a chocolate biscuit into your cell, and you get a few months in solitary confinement.

Serialised on his release in **AX** magazine and now in English from Fanfare/Ponent Mon (www.ponentmon.com), **Doing Time** is Hanawa's meticulous, quietly damning 240-page journal. Part autobiography, part art therapy, its creepy fascination lies in wondering how anyone could have survived these dehumanising experiences and whether you could too.

One of **Garo**'s most recent discoveries is Kan Takahama. **Kinderbook**, her first in English from Fanfare/Ponent, collects ten of her quirky tales of everyday strangeness, about mermaids, suicide pacts and making a porno movie. She composes them with an ear for dialogue worthy of Eric Rohmer and a refreshing pictorial panache, blending her academic drawing with skilful computerised effects.

In April 2002, Takahama discovered the work of Frédéric Boilet, a Frenchman and bande dessinée auteur living and working in Tokyo. Meeting him was like finding a kindred spirit, both eager to explore the subtleties of the human heart in their comics.

Boilet's graphic novel **Yukiko's Spinach** is a candid love letter to Mariko, his model and muse. Praised as 'La Nouvelle Manga' for its innovative East-meets-West fusion, it inspired Takahama to collaborate on a sequel.

Mariko Parade is their joint account of Fréderic and Mariko's gradual break-up during a seaside vacation. Kan chooses the perfect symbol for this in the island's Hydrangea blossoms; to the French these represent enduring love, whereas in Japan they mean love's ending. Far from gloomy, this exquisitely funny and tender piece affirms, "A flower is never more beautiful than at the very moment it begins to fade."

For anyone who thought they knew what manga comics were like, these new translations offer a glimpse of how truly multifaceted the medium has become. And they're just the tip of the iceberg.

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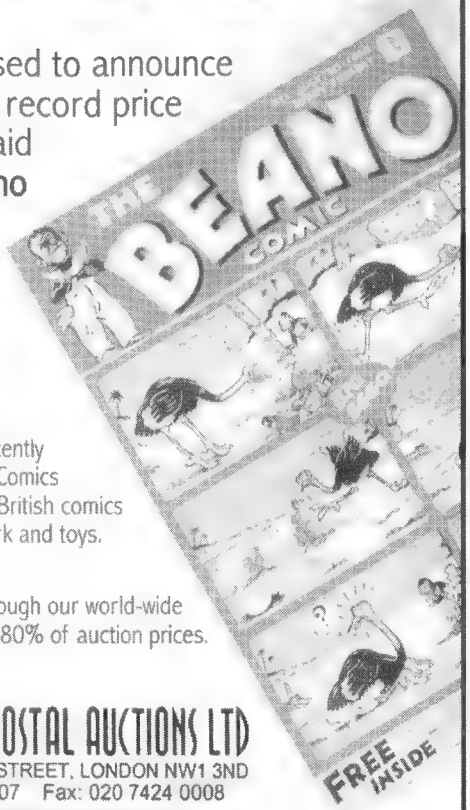

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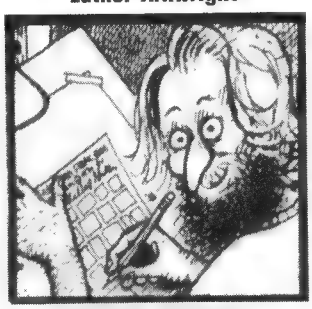

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It's a wonderful life (story)...

Talking Shop with Stephen Holland

Reminding people there's a real mainstream out there

THE OTHER week I was invited to introduce The Broadway Cinema's run of *American Splendor*, based – as I'm sure by now you're sick of hearing – on the comic by Harvey Pekar.

And for the first time in my life I was being paid £150 an hour. The only snag was they only wanted 10 minutes. Plus, I had to give the prospect some serious consideration, which lowered my hourly rate substantially. "No worries," I thought, "I'm sure I can get a column out of this." Heh.

Quick summary of **American Splendor** the comic, then: Grumpy bloke tells you about his life. In excruciating detail. Doesn't really have bestseller lists written all over it, does it? And let's face it, Harvey really is no one special. He's not a doctor or nurse; he's not a fireman, teacher nor a campaigner for social justice. Coming down the ladder a rung or two, he's not even a footballer, actress or popstar.

In prose, overwhelmingly, autobiographies are the province of the famous. The reason we read them is that we're curious about their subject's history and what makes them tick. If an autobiography comes from a novelist or a playwright, it can be incisive and entertaining – because, after all, it's their job – while at the same time illuminating when it comes to a reading of their works. If it comes from David Beckham, it can be blatantly written by someone else.

But in comics the idea is radically different. There are few celebrities within the comicbook world who have created autobiographical comics. Neil Gaiman has dabbled here and there, as has Jim Woodring, but the only real contenders are Will Eisner and Eddie Campbell. In fact **How To Be An Artist**, in which the creator addresses his younger self, is possibly the closest you'll find in comics to the film *American Splendor*, messing around as it does with the fourth wall and playing all sorts of neat little tricks to keep the audience grinning.

Instead, the comics autobiography is a genre unto itself, a field full of individuals who have no special place in the public's heart, just a talent for putting pen to paper. Artists and writers have latched onto the potent and not-so-strange notion that their day-to-day readership will be able to relate to their day-to-day existence as unextraordinary individuals.

In addition to Pekar, there's French-Canadian Julie Doucet, whose feverish work focuses on her decidedly adult life and insists on combining sex and sharp objects in a way guaranteed to have most of us men clutching our crotches with trepidation.

Chester Brown's endearingly candid **Playboy** deals with an early, guilt-ridden addiction to pornography, whereas his friend and colleague Joe Matt's **Peepshow** series makes Chet's confessions seem positively coy.

More recently a new guard have arrived, from Craig Thompson's assured and enormous **Blankets**, to John Porcellino's perfect and poignant evocation of miserable teenage helplessness in **Perfect Example**, and Jeffrey Brown's joyfully naive fumblings through sex and relationships in **Clumsy** and **Unlikely** – all four of which were amongst our top 20 bestsellers last year.

> In comics, if you have something to say – and the skill with which to say it – there is very little that need get in your way.

Why then should there be such a thriving autobiographical scene in comics? Why are so many ordinary people unveiling their lives? Simply, because they can. Cast your minds back to the credits you endured at the end of the last blockbuster you saw. How long did they go on for? You could write a novella during the time it took you to sit through that *Matrix* featurette. All those actors, make-up artists, lighting, clothing and scenery people. Not to mention the sound, the casting and special effects.

Not only is that a lot of people you need to filter a film through before whatever's left of the original idea hits the screens, but it's a lot of people to pay for. That means you need a damned big audience, so often you end up having to appeal to the lowest common denominators. I heard, for example, that *James Bond: Licensed To Kill* was originally called *Licensed Revoked* – which makes a lot more sense if you've seen the movie. Unfortunately they had to change the name on discovering that no one in America actually knew what "revoked" meant. Imagine what that sort of mentality does to the plots, script and pacing of these films.

In comics, if you have something to say – and the skill with which to say it – there is very little that need get in your way.

At their most basic, production costs can be as minimal as buying your art materials, taking a trip to the local photocopier, then spending hours of fun with a staple gun. That way you produce as many as you think will sell, whether it's 50, 100, 500 or three. And that's cost-effective. It may not be time-effective, but the industry is accessible that way.

You don't have to be rich and famous, dilute the contents to appease your editor, nor reach a mass audience to recoup a massive outlay.

Even if the comics are published by someone else, as in the case of **From Hell** from Top Shelf, editorial interference there is non-existent so you're getting the absolute world according to Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell. And even in the case of **League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen** published by DC, there are relatively few people to assuage that (with his stature) Alan Moore can say almost precisely what he has to say, and needs only an artist to help him transfer his ideas to paper.

These are several of the reasons why both those titles – riddled with wit and new ideas – are like Shakespeare compared to the films they spawned.

I know that it's difficult to comprehend, but there are still some people out there who do not understand that – far from being an inferior medium – we are the last, best hope for a purer art, relatively free from the constrictions of mainstream compromise and commercialisation.

To say (with a sneer), "I don't read comics" is like saying, "I don't read books," "I don't listen to music," or "I don't do films."

If people tell you this, remember: they're stupid enough to dismiss an entire medium. It's not like saying "I don't do drugs." Except, of course, that they're both highly addictive.

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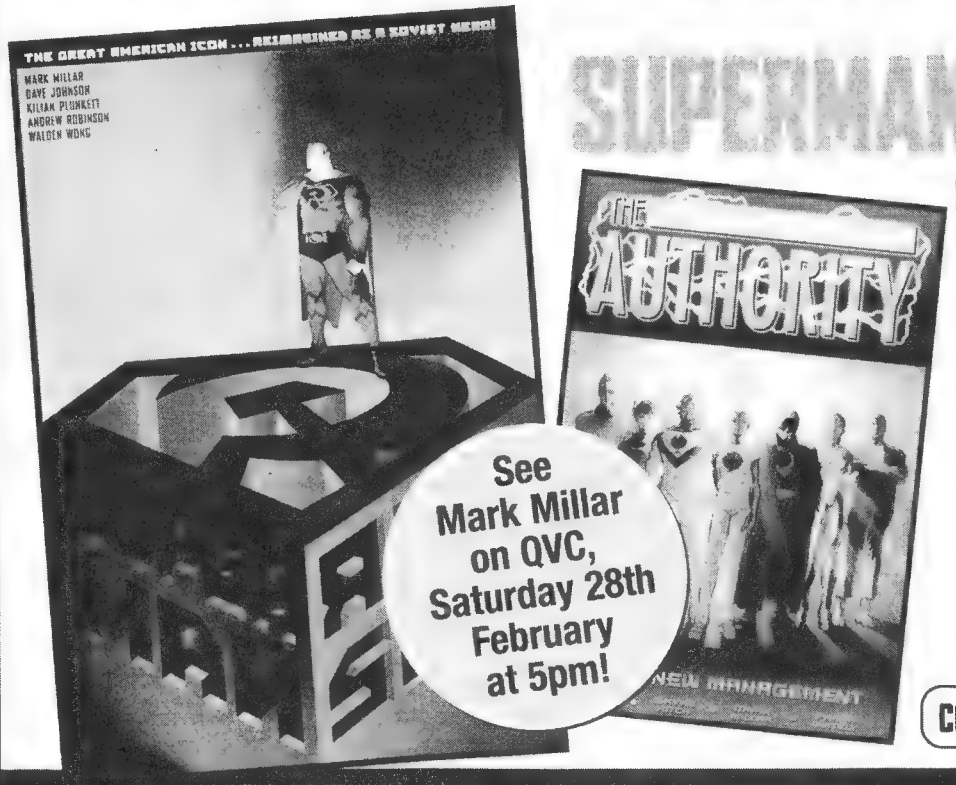

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The following are 32 page colour titles unless stated

ON SALE FROM

APRIL 7

Dark Horse

B.P.R.D.: A Plague of Frogs 2 (Mike Mignola & Guy Davis) Separated from the group when their helicopter crashes, Roger the Homunculus, enthralled by a mysterious child, winds up hanging from the neck in an abandoned building. $2.99

one-shot **Castle Waiting Vol 0: The Curse of Brambly Hedge** (Linda Medley; tpbk) Potter-esque readability, rich characterisation, classic fairy tale mythology, and unexpected twists with a contemporary flavour and sense of humour. b&w 96pg $9.95

Oh My Goddess! 107: Sora Unchained 3 (of 8; Kosuke Fujishima) Belldandy comes to meek Sora's assistance with some confidence lessons. Sometimes all it takes is a helping hand to swipe one's fears aside on the road towards success. b&w $2.99

Star Wars: Empire 20 (Ron Marz) It's six months after the destruction of the Death Star, and every Rebel in the galaxy has a price on his or her head. Worse, the Rebel Alliance still has not been able to locate a new, secret location for a base. $2.99

DC Comics

The Authority 11 (Robbie Morrison & Dwayne Turner + Sal Regla; *WildStorm)* The Authority, confronts an international crisis: the return of Jenny Quantum's mother! Mature readers. $2.95

Batman: City of Light 7 (of 8; The Pander Brothers + Mark Paniccia & Alvaro Lopez) Purge has kidnapped another victim, and Tower One threatens to smash Detectives Allen and Montoya to smithereens. Can Batman keep his crumbling psyche together long enough to save them all? $2.95

Detective Comics 793 (Andersen Gabrych + A.J. Lieberman & various) Batman struggles for a way to safety through a mountain of rubble as Leslie Thompkins desperately tries to save an innocent woman and her unborn child! 40pg $2.95

new **Enginehead** 1 (of 8; Joe Kelly & Ted Mckeever) Six heroes are melded into one machine-based superhero: Enginehead! The action goes down in Irontown, as Enginehead is created from a handful of DC heroes, Professor Emil Hamilton, Automan, Rosie the Riveter, among them. $2.50

Fallen Angel 10 (Peter David & David Lopez + Fernando Blanco) The Angel brings a piece of the cross to Sister Anne, but instead of being grateful, she demands that Lee make amends for the blood she shed in getting the shard. Mature readers. $2.95

Hard Time 3 (Steve Gerber & Brian Hurtt) Nobody knows how a skinhead was beaten to a pulp in a secure cell at State Penitentiary – but everyone knows it has something to do with the new kid. $2.50

one-shot **Human Target: Strike Zones** (Peter Milligan & Javier Pulido; *Vertigo;* tpbk) Collecting the first five issues of the series. Christopher Chance has left LA for New York City, but his strange career as a professional assassin decoy continues to blur the boundaries between illusion and reality. Mature. 128pg $9.95

JLA: Rules of Engagement (Joe Kelly + Rick Veitch & various; tpbk) Collecting JLA #77-82. The World's Greatest Superheroes must confront Mnemon's attack on the solar system, followed by a visit to an alien world as the team tries its hand at being proactive. 144pg ... $12.95

Justice League Adventures 30 (Stuart Moore & Tim Levins + Robin Riggs) It's action in the far future as the Flash – the Fastest Man Alive – battles alongside Kamandi, the last boy on Earth! .. $2.25

Looney Tunes 113 (various) Marvin the Martian kidnaps Wile E. Coyote – or is it the other way around? Plus, tales starring Witch Hazel, Rocky & Muggsy, and the evil twin of Yosemite Sam. $2.25

MAD Magazine 441 (The Usual Gang Of Idiots) There's no better way to celebrate April Fool's Day than with a brand spankin' new issue of MAD. 48pg $3.50

The Monolith 3 (Jimmy Palmiotti + Justin Gray & Phil Winslade) The secret to how the Monolith was sealed beneath Alice's house is revealed. $2.95

My Faith In Frankie 4 (of 4; Mike Carey & Sonny Liew + Marc Hempel; *Vertigo)* The miniseries concludes as Jeriven has been dragged down to Bragash's hellish realm to face eternal torments. Mature readers. $2.95

Plastic Man 5 (Kyle Baker) The madness continues, as Plastic Man confronts the ghosts of his past as Eel O'Brien. $2.95

one-shot **Red/Tokyo Storm** (Warren Ellis & various; *WildStorm;* tpbk) Includes a stark tale of revenge, as retired CIA killer Paul Moses finds himself forced back into the game to gain revenge on the agency that trained him! Mature. 144pg . $14.95

Robotech: Invasion 4 (of 5; Jay Faerber + Ken Siu-Chong & Takeshi Miyazawa + Omar Dogan; *WildStorm)* Spirits run high among Robotech's New Generation as the survivors of the 10th Mars Division renew their ambitious exhibition to liberate the Earth from the Invid. $2.95

The Sandman Presents: Thessaly – Witch For Hire 3 (Bill Willingham & Shawn Mcmanus; *Vertigo)* At the Casa de Thessaly, Fetch has been whiling away the time catnapping as Thess's impending doom draws nigh. Mature. $2.95

one-shot **Smallville** (various; tpbk) Nine comics stories featuring characters from the series. Clark Kent battles a raptor-like Kryptonite freak and an invisible foe in Smallville, while strange things happen at the Miss Smallville beauty pageant. 160pg $9.95

Superman: Birthright 9 (of 12; Mark Waid & Leinil Yu + Gerry Alanguilan) Clark Kent uncovers what Lex Luthor really has planned for Metropolis, and it could mean the end of Superman. $2.95

Swamp Thing 2 (Andy Diggle & Enriqué Breccia; *Vertigo)* Abby tries to reason with the fearsome Swamp Thing, only to discover that the all-powerful elemental has turned his back on humanity once and for all. Mature readers. $2.95

Y: The Last Man 21 (Brian K. Vaughan & Goran Parlov + José Marzan Jr; *Vertigo)* Yorick, Agent 355, Dr Mann and Ampersand hit the road again on their way to San Francisco, but a pitstop in a small town in Arizona finds them face-to-face with a heavily-armed militia made up of female survivors. Mature. $2.95

Marvel

Alpha Flight 2 (Scott Lobdell & Clayton Henry) Now that he's assembled the All-New, All-Different Alpha Flight squad, what's Sasquatch going to do with them? $2.99

Captain America & The Falcon 2 *(Two Americas* 2 of 4; Priest & Bart Sears) Hunted by the US military as well as a vicious drug cartel, the Falcon is on the run in Cuba when he's captured by a mysterious, superpowered assailant. $2.99

Elektra 35 (Robert Rodi & Jon Proctor; *Marvel Knights)* In this self-contained prologue to a new story arc, Elektra visits her own grave and strives to come to terms with her mysterious resurrection after having died in Daredevil's arms. $2.99

Exiles 45 *(A Blink in Time* 3 of 3; Chuck Austen & Jim Calafiore) The Exiles don't have time to celebrate Blink's return – because the fate of an entire world is at stake, and it's their job to save it. $2.99

new **Marvel Age: Fantastic Four** 1 (various; *Marvel Age)* When nuclear plants around the globe are swallowed up by the Earth itself, it's up to the Fantastic Four to take on the source of all the mayhem – the Mole Man! $2.25

Marvel Age: Spider-Man 2 (various; *Marvel Age)* Revisit the very first meeting of Spidey and Doc Ock in issue 2 of the new All Ages series. $2.25

Marvel Masterworks: The Amazing Spider-Man Vol 6 (Stan Lee & John Romita + Don Heck) Collects Amazing Spider-Man #51-61, Annual 4. Includes a four-part Doctor Octopus epic – plus appearances by the Kingpin, Ka-Zar, the Spider-Slayer, Captain Stacy and more. 304pg $49.99

New X-Men 155 *(Bright New Mourning* 1 of 2; Chuck Austen & Salvador Larroca) In the aftermath of Magneto's rampage upon NYC and the Xavier Institute, Cyclops and Emma find themselves at a crossroads. $2.25

one-shot **The Punisher: The End** 1 (Garth Ennis & Richard Corben; *MAX Comics)* In a world gone mad, the Punisher just might be the sanest man on Earth. Now he's heading home, to the place it all began, and heaven help anyone who stands in his path. 56pg $4.50

Spider-Girl 72 (Tom Defalco & Ron Frenz) The Black Tarantula continues his efforts to draw Spider-Girl to the dark side as she renews her hunt for the new Doctor Octopus! $2.99

one-shot **Spider-Man: Blue** (Jeph Loeb & Tim Sale; tpbk) A look back at a pivotal era for the Amazing Spider-Man – including the introduction of Peter's first love, Gwen Stacy. 144pg $14.99

one-shot **Spider-Man: The Death Of Captain Stacy** (Stan Lee & John Romita + Gil Kane; tpbk) Before Peter Parker lost the first great love of his life Gwen Stacy, her father – a respected former NYPD police officer and trusted friend to Peter *and* Spider-Man – fell to one of Spidey's greatest foes – Doctor Octopus. Collects Amazing Spider-Man #88-92. 112pg $12.99

Supreme Power 9 (J. Michael Straczynski & Gary Frank; *MAX Comics)* The world is still shaking from the titanic battle of Hyperion and Dr Spectrum. Is Earth big enough for two such powerful beings? $2.99

Thanos 9 (Keith Giffen & Ron Lim) Thanos makes his manipulative presence felt in the depths of the intergalactic maximum-security penitentiary Omega. $2.99

Thor 77 *(Gods & Men* 3 of 5; Dan Jurgens & Scot Eaton) Only one can wield Mjolnir, the mighty mystic Uru hammer. Will it be Thor, or his son Magni? $2.99

Ultimate Spider-Man 56 *(Spider-Man Goes Hollywood* 3 of 5; Brian Michael Bendis & Mark Bagley) The Spider-Man movie is in full-swing filming a big Spidey/Doc Ock action sequence. That is, until the real wall-crawler & Doctor Octopus crash the set and rumble behind the camera! . $2.25

Uncanny X-Men 442 *(Of Darkest Nights* 1 of 2; Chuck Austen & Salvador Larroca) With the threat of Magneto finally at an end, Professor X sets off to Genosha to memorialise his greatest foe and oldest friend – something that doesn't sit well at all with Wolverine! $2.25

Wolverine 13 (Greg Rucka & Darick Robertson; *Marvel Knights)* Somewhere in the Canadian Wilderness lurks the one that got away – a creature even wilder than Logan. Sabretooth has located her, and he's got the scars to prove it. $2.25

X-Men Unlimited 2 (David Hine + Robert Kirkman & Adi Granov + Takeshi Miyazawa) A gritty urban tale starring Bishop of the X-Men! Bimonthly. $2.99

close-up

Batgirl: Fists of Fury

DC Comics

Writers: Kelley Puckett + Scott Peterson

Artists: various

Collecting Batgirl #15-16, #21, and #26-28. In this volume, Batgirl faces the deadliest of Gotham villains – the Joker. The Clown Prince of Crime gets the last laugh when Cassandra and special guest star Spoiler must defeat a Jokerized Shadow Thief. Then, can Batgirl stop the father of a young boy from making a lethal mistake? 144pg $14.95

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Dark Horse

Berserk Vol 3 (Kenturo Miura; tpbk) Guts, the feared Black Swordsman, finishes his desperate battle with the monstrous Count, but the Count's dying pleas activate the Behelit, summoning the five God Hands, demon lords of immeasurable power. 240pg b&w $13.95

one-shot **Blade of the Immortal 88: Light and Shadow** (Hiroaki Samura) Hunted by the surviving members of the Shingyōtō-ryū clan, Rin continues her flight towards Edo. Mature. b&w $2.99

The Goon 6 (Eric Powell) As if the Goon doesn't have enough to worry about, what with zombies, werewolves, vampires, bog lurks, and psychic amphibious mammals running around, the last thing he needs is an alien invasion! $2.99

Hellboy: Weird Tales 8 (various) The creators present their takes on their favourite paranormal investigator's entanglements with a monstrous toy company, WWII fighter pilots, and a skeleton casting call. $2.99

new **Shi: Ju-Nen** 1 (of 4; Billy Tucci) Ana Ishikawa returns to her native Japan where she desperately tries to avert an all out war between the secretive sects of the Kyoto and Nara Sohei. $2.99

Tales of the Vampires 5 (Joss Whedon & Alex Sanchez + various) Joss Whedon wraps up his Tales of the Vampires series, finally revealing the truth behind the young Watchers' training programme and their introduction to their ancient vampire tutor. $2.99

one-shot **What's Michael?: The Ideal Cat** (Makoto Kobayashi; tpbk) Combines day-to-day cat scenarios every cat lover will recognise, with off-the-wall flights of fantasy. 88pg b&w $8.95

DC Comics

Action Comics 814 (Chuck Austen & Ivan Reis + Marc Campos) A day in the life for anyone else would be ordinary, but not for Superman! There are robbers to catch, children to save, and the hordes of Apokolips to stop. $2.50

Aquaman 17 (Will Pfeifer & Patrick Gleason + Christian Alamy) Thousands are trapped beneath the ruins of San Diego, scared and starving – but somehow able to breathe underwater! It's up to Aquaman to dig them out of the wreckage with the aid of Martian Manhunter. $2.50

one-shot **Batgirl: Fists of Fury** (Kelley Puckett + Scott Peterson & various; tpbk) *See Close-Up on facing page.*

Batman: Death and the Maidens 9 (of 9; Greg Rucka & Klaus Janson) Batman's greatest adversary has fallen, but the danger hasn't passed. Nyssa's endgame reaches the point of no return in Metropolis. $2.95

Batman in World's Finest Archives Vol 2 (various; hbk) Reprinting 16 adventures from World's Finest #17-32, from 1941-1948. Only one of these stories has been reprinted since its original release. 228pg $49.95

Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 178 *(Lost Cargo* 2 of 2; Devin Grayson & Jean-Jacques Dzialowski + George Rodriguez) The clock is ticking on the lives of 30 exotic dancers, and Batman is nowhere to be found. $2.50

new **Bite Club** 1 (of 6; Howard Chaykin + David Tischman & David Hahn; *Vertigo)* When Eduardo Del Toro is brutally murdered, he leaves control of the cartel to his youngest son, Leto – Miami's first vampire priest – who wants nothing to do with the family business. Mature readers. $2.95

Fables 24 (Bill Willingham & Mark Buckingham + Steve Leialoha; *Vertigo)* Boy Blue has gone missing. Trouble is brewing up at the Farm. And Bigby is still out of town. Mature readers. $2.50

Gotham Central 18 (Greg Rucka & Greg Scott) As the cops of Gotham Central put their lives back together after the Joker's assault, their hottest homicide case comes to a head! $2.50

Green Arrow 37 *(City Walls* 4 of 5; Judd Winick & Phil Hester + Ande Parks) The Riddler's setting off weapons of mass destruction; Giant demons are holding Star City under martial law; Gangsters are fighting side by side with cops; Batman's looking for answers in the occult. . $2.50

H-E-R-O 15 (Will Pfeifer & Dale Eaglesham + Wade Von Grawbadger) Robby Reed shows up at the door of Jerry Feldon and tells him that they've got to track the H-E-R-O device down together. $2.50

JLA 96 *(The Tenth Circle* 3 of 6; John Byrne + Chris Claremont & Byrne + Jerry Ordway) The Circle has turned the JLA against one another – and it looks like it's up to Wonder Woman to close the Circle completely! $2.25

JSA 60 (Geoff Johns & Don Kramer + Keith Champagne) The murder of a new legacy hero in the deep South puts the JSA on the trail of a very unlikely killer. $2.50

Nightwing 92 (Devin Grayson & Manuel Garcia + Andy Owens) Blockbuster has thrown every resource into his war against Dick Grayson, and Nightwing has weathered the storm despite a slew of shocking casualties. $2.25

Scooby-Doo 83 (various) Ghosts haunt the sets of a monster movie and a spooky TV show! $2.25

Stormwatch: Team Achilles 21 (Micah Ian Wright & Clement Suave; *WildStorm)* The Santini tries to build an economic backbone for the new Stormwatch, carrying out his part of the bargain with his new paymasters: The Illuminati! Mature readers. $2.95

Teen Titans 10 *(Raven Rising* 2 of 5; Geoff Johns & Mike Mckone + Marlo Alquiza) The Teen Titans seek out the Cult of Brother Blood in an attempt to learn where Raven is being held against her will. $2.50

Tom Strong 26 (Mark Schultz & Pascual Ferry; *America's Best Comics)* Aircraft across the world are mysteriously grounded as all engine-driven flight is rendered impossible. Now, after discovering a secret from his past, Tom Strong must solve this mystery – or mankind will forever be banned from the skies! $2.95

new **Touch** 1 (John Francis Moore & Wes Craig + Prentiss Rollins) Meet Rory Goodman. He's super-strong, invulnerable, charismatic – and he's Vegas's newest star. But being able to punch through buildings isn't going to help him when his greatest threat is right under his nose. $2.50

Marvel

4 #4 *(Wolf at the Door* 4 of 4; Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa & Steve McNiven; *Marvel Knights)* Reed finds himself drawing strength from the memory of one of the greatest men he's ever known: his grandfather. $2.99

Captain America 25 (Robert Morales & Chris Bachalo; *Marvel Knights)* Homeland concludes with a showdown over biological weapons in Cuba, while things heat up between Steve and Rebecca – and Cap faces a life-changing decision! $2.99

Emma Frost 10 *(Mind Games* 4 of 6; Karl Bollers & Carlo Pagulayan) Emma never gambled on falling in love so quickly, but now that she has, she's in deep and about to pay the ultimate price! ... $2.99

Incredible Hulk 70 (Bruce Jones & Mike Deodato Jr; *Marvel Knights)* Self-contained prologue to a four-part story arc, introducing a mysterious young man who just might hold the key to Bruce Banner – and the Hulk's – future. $2.25

Iron Fist 2 (Jim Mullaney & Kevin Lau) Tragedy compels Danny Rand to throw out his Iron Fist costume and abandon his old life, and he leaves NYC to seek solace in a lonely cabin in the Rockies. $2.99

Iron Man 79 *(The Deep End* 1 of 4; John Jackson Miller & Philip Tan) American soldiers are mysteriously vanishing in the Middle East – and it's up to Iron Man to investigate. $2.99

one-shot **Marvel Age: Runaways Vol 1 – Pride & Joy Digest** (Brian K. Vaughan & Adrian Alphona) Meet Alex, Karolina, Gert, Chase, Molly and Nico. When these six friends discover their parents are all secretly superpowered villains, the shocked teens find strength in one another. Collects Runwaways #1-6. ..... $7.99

one-shot **Marvel Age: Sentinel Vol 1 – Salvage Digest** (Sean McKeever & Udon) This teen, sci-fi drama shows one contemporary teenager's struggle to find his own voice, to stand up for himself and to discover what it means to be a hero in the 21st century! But really it's about a boy and his giant robot! Collects Sentinel #1-6. ..... $7.99

one-shot **Marvel Age: Spider-Girl Vol 1 Digest** (Tom Defalco & Ron Frenz + Pat Olliffe) The earliest adventures of Spider-Man's daughter from the future – Spider-Girl – are collected. $7.99

one-shot **Marvel Age: Spider-Man Vol 1 Digest** (various) Meet Spider-Man and his most menacing villains – Doctor Octopus, Doctor Doom, the Vulture and the Sandman – in this contemporary revisiting of Stan Lee and Steve Ditko's classic Spidey stories. 128pg ... $7.99

She-Hulk 2 (Dan Slott & Juan Bobillo) She-Hulk's already landed a case on her first day at her new law firm. Her client is big, strong and handsome and has more super powers than you can shake a stick at. $2.99

Spectacular Spider-Man 13 *(The Lizard's Tale* 3 of 3; Paul Jenkins & Damion Scott) As Curt Connors' self-destructive behaviour escalates, Spidey must try to corral his out-of-control friend. ... $2.25

new **Spider-Man** 1 (Mark Millar & Terry Dodson; *Marvel Knights)* Action-packed, hyper-realistic tale finding Peter Parker forced to face the cruel realities that wearing the Spider-Man mask and web-shooters brings to his personal life. $2.99

Thor: Son of Asgard 3 (of 6; Akira Yoshida & Greg Tocchini) Thor, Sif and Balder continue their quest across Asgard in search of the four mystic elements that Odin has sent them to retrieve in this Epic coming-of-age tale. $2.99

Ultimate X-Men 44 *(New Mutants* 5 of 6; Brian Michael Bendis & David Finch) The US Government pulls out the big guns to deal with the mutant problem – i.e. Sentinels! $2.25

X-Statix 21 *(X-Statix vs Avengers* 1 of 5; Peter Milligan & Mike Allred; *Marvel Knights)* America's favourite mutant team is about to square off against Earth's Mightiest Heroes in the rumble of the century so far. $2.99

Illuminations

Highlights from April's releases

Selected by Martin "Biff" Averre

Shi: Ju-Nen #1 marks the return of Billy Tucci to his most famous creation which, during its first year (1994), became one of the hottest titles around. Back then the first issue was changing hands for £30 within a year of publication. Since Tucci's own company (Crusade) ceased publishing, issues of **Shi** have been few and far between, moving from publisher to publisher. Sales obviously fell, but his ability to draw some of the most realistic and sexy women cannot be disputed. Perhaps Dark Horse can succeed where others have failed and make this four-issue miniseries the turning point that puts Billy Tucci back in the top seller list. **Sales 2/5 Quality 5/5**

Again DC appears to be saving all the best creative changes for its on-going major titles. It seems to me that it came to a realisation about a year ago that it was getting all the top talent creating *Elseworlds* titles and one-off pet projects and leaving its main titles running on idle, consequently sales were falling. First came the energising of **Batman** by Jim Lee, then **Robin** by Bill Willingham, Michael Turner on **Superman/Batman**, **JLA** by Chris Claremont and John Byrne, and now Jim Lee is back to kick-start the Superman legend. And not a new issue #1 in sight. Brian Azzarello joins Lee on **Superman** #204 as they embark on a 12-issue voyage of excitement, which I firmly expect to at least double sales on **Superman** and bring strong storytelling back to the fore. **Sales 5/5 quality 5/5**

Several years ago, Warren Ellis and Chris Weston started work on a three-issue series, **Ministry of Space**. The first two issues appeared and then... nothing. Various rumours and bitching followed about why the final issue was not being drawn, but no hard truth. Well, whatever the problem was it is now resolved, and the final issue is drawn (so a source informs me) so expect issue #3 in stores by April. This delay between issues beats the record gap set by Brian Bolland with **Camelot 3000**, when there was nearly a year between **Camelot** #11 and #12. At least he got 12 issues out in three years and not just three. Despite this gap, the art of Chris Weston is worth the wait and Warren Ellis seldom fails to deliver a great story. I expect virtually all the purchasers of issues #1 and #2 to return for #3. **Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5**

By far and away Marvel's most consistently excellent title, **The Ultimates** by Mark Millar and Bryan Hitch, is a joyous combination of art and script which effortlessly draws the reader into a machismo world of adrenaline junkie heroes. Each issue has been in the Top Ten of the relevant sales month. I mention this, as it seems odd that Marvel has decided to return to issue one, with **The Ultimates** Volume 2 #1. If you have never read an issue of this book, now is a good time to hop on board. The story starts a year after the Chitauri invasion attempt. From a retailer point of view this is a good time to up your orders, as issue #1s always prompt renewed interest. **Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5**

Ever since Joe Quesada successfully relaunched **Daredevil** (Marvel Knights) by drawing the first 15 issues, it has been a resounding success on new and back issue sales. Now, after an absence of four years, he is returning to the character with a six-issue miniseries **Daredevil: Father**. Quesada has proven he still has the old magic; his current **NYX** series is proving to be a real top seller. And it's obvious that this series, which tells the story of Daredevil's battle against a serial killer in the heat of a New York summer will definitely be another Top Ten hit. **Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5**

With 22 years of comics retail experience as Ace Comics, Biff has also produced his ***Illuminations*** *monthly fanzine for 19 years before moving it to the web.*

X-Treme X-Men 45 (Chris Claremont & Igor Kordey) Prisoner of Fire concludes in issue 45. ..... $2.99

ON SALE FROM

APRIL 21

Dark Horse

new **El Zombo** 1 (of 3; Kevin Munroe & Dave Wilkins) Pro wrestling champ El Zombo gets a second lease on life after being unceremoniously murdered in a back alley for refusing to take a dive in the ring. His deal is to return to Earth to help Belisa Montoya – a troubled girl about to fall victim to a horrible unknown accident. $2.99

one-shot **Hell Vol 1: Hell and Gone** (Brian Augustyn & Todd Demong + Tim Kane; tpbk) *See Close-Up, below.*

one-shot **Michael Chabon Presents: The Amazing Adventures of the Escapist** Vol 1 (various; tpbk) Operating from a secret headquarters under the boards of the majestic Empire Theatre, the Escapist and his team of charismatic associates roam the globe, performing amazing feats of magic to aid all those who languish in oppression's chains. 152pg $17.95

new **Steve Rude's The Moth** 1 (Steve Rude) The Moth runs smack into the face of trouble, in the form of his archrival, Nestor the bounty hunter. $2.99

DC Comics

Adventures of Superman 627 (Greg Rucka & Matthew Clark + Nelson) An old foe comes to Metropolis with murder – and something much more sinister – on his mind. $2.50

Batman Adventures 13 (Ty Templeton + Dan Slott & Rick Burchett + Terry Beatty) Who's in charge of Gotham City? The Penguin and Batman face off over it – but you'll be surprised by the answer! $2.25

Batman: Gotham Knights 52 (A.J. Lieberman & Al Barrionuevo + Francis Portela) For two months, Hush has tormented the Riddler. But now the Joker is stepping in, and when these arch-villains draw their lines in the sand, you can count on blood being spilled! 40pg $2.95

Birds of Prey 66 (Gail Simone & Michael Golden + Mike Manley) Canary discovers that a bizarre link to the past may have deadly consequences in the present, as she uncovers a time when the Golden Age Birds of Prey stalked a serial killer. $2.50

new **Fraction** 1 (David Tischman & Timothy Green II) Telling the tale of four tough Philly guys who steal the components of a powerful battle suit! When they split the parts between them, all their lives are changed as paranoia and in-fighting turn them against one another. $2.50

Hawkman 27 (Ed Brubaker & Sean Phillips) A Pinkerton Detective on the trail of a stolen artifact stumbles across his long-lost love, a tragic beauty who has turned to crime and drug-addiction in the sleazy red-light districts of World War I era St Roch. $2.50

Human Target 9 *(Which Way the Wind Blows* 3 of 3; Peter Milligan & Cliff Chiang; *Vertigo)* Ex-Weatherman James Malloy has blown into town, and he's found a way to coerce Chance into his new assault upon the American government. Mature readers. ... $2.95

Lucifer 49 *(Stitchglass Slide* 4 of 4; Mike Carey & Peter Gross + Ryan Kelly; *Vertigo)* The eviction of the immortals nears its end, but as Elaine and Mazikeen do battle against forests and mountains, the identity of their final quarry becomes ominously clear. Mature. $2.50

Outsiders 11 (Judd Winick & Will Conrad + Sean Parsons) Arsenal confronts his inner demons as his recent brush with death continues to haunt him. $2.50

The Powerpuff Girls 49 (various) The Powerpuff Girls beat the dumb but destructive Amoeba Boys silly in two tales! $2.25

Robin 125 (Bill Willingham & Francisco Rodriguez De La Fuente + Aaron Sowd) Johnny Warlock's plan of vengeance against Robin is set in motion – but that's the least of the Boy Wonder's problems! $2.25

Rose & Thorn 5 (of 6; Gail Simone & Adriana Melo + Dan Green) Thorn rampages against The 100 while her deranged nemesis Ashleigh guns for everyone else! $2.95

Superman/Batman 9 (Jeph Loeb & Michael Turner) The mysterious girl trapped inside the Kryptonite meteor that fell to Earth is taken to the Fortress of Solitude, where Superman and Batman try to teach her to fit into our society. $2.95

one-shot **Superman/Batman: Public Enemies** (Jeph Loeb & Ed McGuinness + Dexter Vines) Can our heroes take down a team composed of such powerhouses as Captain Marvel, Hawkman, Power Girl, and Black Lightning? 160pg $16.95

Superman: Secret Identity 4 (of 4; Kurt Busiek & Stuart Immonen) The new Superman is close to the end of his life – his power ebbing and the world changing around him. 48pg $5.95

Tom Strong's Terrific Tales 10 (Alan Moore + Steve Moore & various; *America's Best Comics)* In Part 2 of *Jonni Future*, Arthur Adams and Bruce Timm once again provide the delightful delineatio's of our delectable heroine. $2.95

Wonder Woman 203 *(Bitter Pills* 1 of 2; Greg Rucka & Drew Johnson + Ray Snyder) Diana's new responsibilities leave her little time to investigate the murder that took place literally, on her doorstep. $2.25

Marvel

Captain Marvel 22 *(Odyssey* 4 of 6; Peter David & Aaron Lopresti) Captain Marvel continues to defend future Earth against the Shi'ar/Kree/Skrull armada. But is the cure worse than the condition? $2.99

Daredevil 59 *(The King of Hell's Kitchen* 4; Brian Michael Bendis & Alex Maleev; *Marvel Knights)* Faced with the growing threat of the Yakuza, Matt Murdock is on the comeback trail as he teams up with some of NYC's toughest heroes to take the fight back! $2.99

Elektra 36 (Robert Rodi & Joe Bennett; *Marvel Knights)* A mysterious figure from Elektra's past arrives in NYC, seeking Matt Murdock's help in finding her. $2.99

Fantastic Four 512 *(Spider Sense* 1 of 2; Mark Waid & Mike Wieringo) The FF has a lot to answer for in the aftermath of Authoritative Action – and when you're trying to regain the trust of New Yorkers, is allying with a certain misunderstood wall-crawler a wise move? $2.25

Hawkeye 7 *(A Little Murder* 1 of 2; Fabian Nicieza & Stefano Rafaelle) When a beloved Brooklyn neighbourhood deli owner is murdered, Clint Barton wants justice, leading Hawkeye on a trail of Russian mobsters, former KGB assassins, big secrets, a very old friend, and a very big surprise! $2.99

New Mutants 13 (Nunzio Defilippis & Christina Weir + Khary Randolph) A special single-issue reunion story starring the Original New Mutants: Moonstar, Cannonball, Magma, Karma, Sunspot & Wolfsbane. $2.99

New X-Men 156 *(Bright New Mourning* 2 of 2; Chuck Austen & Salvador Larroca) Cyclops and Emma find themselves at a crossroads. Should the school be rebuilt? Should they continue on as X-Men? And how will it affect their blossoming relationship? $2.25

Runaways 14 *(The Good Die Young* 2 of 2; Brian K. Vaughan & Adrian Alphona) The Runaways have learned how their parents' villainous organisation began, and now they must decide how it should end. $2.99

Ultimate Spider-Man 57 *(Spider-Man Goes Hollywood* 4 of 5; Brian Michael Bendis & Mark Bagley) Guest-starring *Spider-Man* director Sam Raimi, actor Tobey Maguire and producer Avi Arad! $2.25

Uncanny X-Men 443 *(Of Darkest Nights* 2 of 2; Chuck Austen & Salvador Larroca) With the threat of Magneto finally at an end, Professor X sets off to Genosha to memorialize his greatest foe and oldest friend. $2.25

Wolverine 14 (Greg Rucka & Darick Robertson; *Marvel Knights)* Somewhere in the Canadian Wilderness lurks the one that got away – a creature even wilder than Logan. Sabretooth has located her, and he's got the scars to prove it. $2.25

Wolverine Vol 2 Coyote Crossing (Greg Rucka & Leandro Fernandez; tpbk) In a dusty border town on the edge of Mexico, Wolverine, the world's most dangerous – and most popular – mutant, chances upon a grisly discovery that begs for his unique brand of justice. Collects Wolverine #7-11. 120pg $11.99

ON SALE FROM

APRIL 28

Dark Horse

Conan 3 (Kurt Busiek & Cary Nord + Dave Stewart) Conan heads into battle with the men of Asgard, never suspecting the treachery they hold in store for him, nor the horror coming down from Hyperborea. $2.99

one-shot **Criminal Macabre: A Cal McDonald Mystery** (Steve Niles & Ben Templesmith; tpbk) *See Close-Up, on facing page.*

one-shot **Eisner/Miller** (Frank Miller & Will Eisner; tpbk) Two of the medium's greatest contributors discuss one-on-one, in an intimate interview format, the ins and outs of comics. 350pg . $19.95

Go Boy 7 Vol 1: Ready Set Go (Tom Peyer & Jon Sommariva + Kris Justice; tpbk) A mysterious plane crash claims the life of Jonny Zero's parents and leaves him critically injured. Enter Professor Zero, Jonny's uncle, who uses his experimental robotic nonplasm to rebuild the boy. 96pg $12.95

Star Wars: Empire Vol 2 – Darklighter (Paul Chadwick & Doug Wheatley + Tomás Giorello; tpbk) The story of Biggs is revealed, from his departure to attend the Imperial Academy, to his decision to lead a mutiny against the Empire. 144pg $17.95

Star Wars: Republic 64 (John Ostrander & Greg Tocchini) Jedi Ronhar Kim strikes up a friendship with a rising politician, never dreaming that, years later, the relationship will make him the target of one of the greatest evils the galaxy has ever seen. $2.99

Super Manga Blast! 42 (various) In *Cannon God Exaxxion*, when aliens threaten to enslave the world, Hoichi Kano becomes humanity's hero as the pilot of the gigantic Exaxxion robot! Mature readers. 128pg b&w $5.99

Ultraman Tiga 9 (of 10; Tony Wong & Khoo Fuk Lung) The alien presence controlling Japan's military reveals its true identity and makes a stand against the Ultraman called Tiga. 40pg .. $3.99

DC Comics

Batgirl 51 (Dylan Horrocks & Rick Leonardi + Jesse Delperdang) A mysterious environmental artist is the talk of Gotham City, but her Garden of Eden is having disturbing effects on the city's population. $2.50

Batman 626 *(As the Crow Flies* 1 of 5; Judd Winick & Dustin Nguyen + Richard Friend) Gotham's underworld is thrown into turmoil as its crime lords slip into a rabid – and murderous – frenzy. $2.25

one-shot **Batman: Gotham Central** (Greg Rucka + Ed Brubaker & Michael Lark; tpbk) Collecting the first five issues of the series. After the gruesome murder of two cops, Gotham's Special Crimes Unit is in a race against time to bring in Mister Freeze – without the help of the Dark Knight. 128pg $9.95

new **Batman: Harley & Ivy** 1 (of 3; Paul Dini & Bruce Timm + Shane Glines) A snafu by Harley sends Poison Ivy back to Arkham, and Ivy swears off working with Harley forever. .. $2.50

Caper 7 (of 12; Judd Winick & John Severin) As the secrets of Tinseltown's elite begin to surface, no one involved may be safe from an insane killer seeking to bring justice to those he sees as unclean. Mature readers. $2.95

Cartoon Cartoons 29 (various) What scares the Grim Reaper? Getting dragged to the circus by Billy and Mandy. Plus, Dexter creates a soda pop that won't stop, and I.M. Weasel grows an I.R. Baboon butt. $2.25

Catwoman 30 (Ed Brubaker & Paul Gulacy + Jimmy Palmiotti) With all her friends deserting her and the East End slipping through her grasp, can Selina survive a rooftop showdown with a villain who once fought Batman to a standstill? $2.50

DC: The New Frontier 4 (of 6; Darwyn Cooke) It's a mystery in space as Superman, the Suicide Squad, and the Challengers of the Unknown encounter a frightening extraterrestrial lifeform. $6.95

one-shot **Fables: Storybook Love** (various; *Vertigo;* tpbk) Collects Fables #11-18, including the four-part *Storybook Love.* Also included are the two-part *A Sharp Operator* and the single-issue tales *Bag o' Bones* and *Barleycorn Brides.* Mature readers. 192pg $14.95

The Flash 209 (Geoff Johns & Howard Porter + Livesay) Flash doesn't have time to hang around the Watchtower while Keystone City is in trouble – so it's up to Superman to bring him back. $2.25

Green Lantern 176 *(Homecoming?* 1 of 6; Ron Marz & Luke Ross + Rodney Ramos) Kyle returns to Earth. But he learns that sometimes you can't go home again, as he finds life has gone on without him. $2.25

Hellblazer 195 *(Out of Season* 1 of 2; Mike Carey & Leonardo Manco; *Vertigo)* Down and out on the South Coast of England, John Constantine is fleeing a murder charge, an inexplicably obsessed serial killer, a voluptuous demon and his own past. Mature readers. $2.75

close-up

Hell Vol 1: Hell and Gone

Dark Horse Comics

Writer: Brian Augustyn

Artists: Todd Demong + Tim Kane

Collecting the four-issue series. After being pursued by FBI agents and encountering a mysterious stranger who claims that his father is still alive, Corey sets out on an adventure that will take him to the island known only as Hell. With packs of monstrous human/animal hybrids, and nightmarish swarms of Chimera, he may never be able to leave. 96pg $12.95

ON SALE APRIL 21

JLA 97 *(The Tenth Circle* 4 of 6; John Byrne + Chris Claremont & Byrne + Jerry Ordway) A critically wounded Wonder Woman bears a message to the rest of the JLA – one that sends her team-mates on an unexpected journey to the Florida Keys. $2.25

Kinetic 2 (Kelley Puckett & Warren Pleece) Tom's miserable life reaches a turning point when he makes a life-altering discovery that will change who – and what – he is! $2.50

The Legion 32 (Dan Abnett + Andy Lanning & Chris Batista + Chip Wallace) R.J. Brande's peace mission to the Second Galaxy goes disastrously wrong when his team falls foul of the murderous Credo. $2.50

The Light Brigade 3 (of 4; Peter Tomasi & Peter Snejbjerg) Things go from bad to worse as the Light Brigade faces unexpected foes while creating deadly ammunition to counter Zephon the Nazi angel and his unholy minions. Mature readers. 48pg $5.95

The Losers 11 *(Island Life* 3 of 5; Andy Diggle & Jock; *Vertigo)* As veteran agent Marvin Stegler digs ever closer to the truth, the beleaguered Losers race against time to seize top secret files from a Caribbean villa. Mature. $2.95

Midnight, Mass: Here There Be Monsters 4 (of 6; John Rozum & Paul Lee; *Vertigo)* Drawing upon the best of their resources – though they don't always agree on what that is – legendary paranormal investigators Adam and Julia Kadmon make their way towards the monster colony at Hope Falls. Mature. $2.95

The Spirit Archives Vol 13 (Will Eisner) Reprinting Spirit Sections from July-December 1946. Included in this volume is the introduction of P'Gell, the return of the Octopus, appearances by Cox Robin and Olga Bustle, and classic Spirit Halloween and Christmas tales. 196pg $49.95

Superman 204 (Brian Azzarello & Jim Lee + Scott Williams) As people around the world disappear, a new world threat tests Superman like never before reveals itself. $2.50

Teen Titans Go! 6 (J. Torres & Todd Nauck + Lary Stucker) Thunder and Lightning duel in the middle of Jump City, but when Cyborg and Beast Boy get involved, it turns into a massive free-for-all. $2.25

one-shot **Tom Strong Book Three** (Alan Moore + Leah Moore & various; *America's Best Comics)* Collecting issues #15-19. Val Var Garm kidnaps Tesla Strong, but even if Tom and Dhalua rescue their daughter, they might still lose her – to a new boyfriend. 144pg $24.95

Wildcats Version 3.0 #20 (Joe Casey & Duncan Rouleau + John Dell; *WildStorm)* The old order changes as Cole Cash assembles his own Covert Action Team that heads to Europe for a major rescue operation. Mature. $2.95

Marvel

4 #5 *(The Pine Barrens* 1 of 3; Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa & Steve McNiven; *Marvel Knights)* Reed, Sue and Ben take Franklin and a group of his friends camping in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey. $2.99

Amazing Spider-Man 507 (J. Michael Straczynski & John Romita Jr) Concluding a three-part arc, featuring the mysterious Ezekiel. $2.25

Avengers 81 (Chuck Austen & Olivier Coipel) As a foe from the past arises to challenge the disarrayed Avengers, a new champion will emerge to meet the threat, and a hero will be reborn. $2.25

Avengers/Thunderbolts 3 (of 6; Fabian Nicieza & Kurt Busiek + Tom Grummett) Has an Avenger infiltrated the T-Bolts' team? Do the T-Bolts have a mole of their own inside the Avengers? And which character is mad as hell and just can't take it any more? $2.99

close-up

Criminal Macabre: A Cal McDonald Mystery

Dark Horse Comics

Writer: Steve Niles

Artisis: Ben Templesmith

Collects a series of occult detective stories featuring the monstrously hard-boiled Cal McDonald. A pill-popping alcoholic reprobate, Cal McDonlad is the only line of defence between Los Angeles and a growing horde of zombies, vampires, and werewolves. Includes material from last year's Hallowe'en issue. 170pg $17.95

ON SALE APRIL 28

new **Daredevil: Father** 1 (of 5; Joe Quesada & Danny Miki + Richard Isanove; *Marvel Knights)* During the deadliest heat wave in NYC history, a serial killer is on the loose pushing a city already past its breaking point over the edge, and Daredevil must battle the heat and fear to keep a crumbling Hell's Kitchen together. $3.50

Human Torch 12 (of 12; Karl Kesel & Paco Medina) Ben Grimm & Johnny battle the Dragon Man on the lawns of State University! $2.99

Incredible Hulk 71 (Bruce Jones & Mike Deodato Jr; *Marvel Knights)* The Hulk goes toe-to-toe with Iron Man in a classic superhero showdown! .. $2.25

Iron Man 80 *(The Deep End* 2 of 4; John Jackson Miller & Philip Tan) American soldiers are mysteriously vanishing in the Middle East – and it's up to Iron Man to investigate. $2.99

Mystique 13 (Brian K. Vaughan & Michael Ryan) Shape-shifting superspy Mystique has a secret, and so does her tiny field handler, Shortpack. Will these two mutants be able to protect the skeletons in their closets and help each other survive a death-defying mission? $2.99

The Punisher 5 (Garth Ennis & Lewis Larosa; *MAX Comics)* Nicky, Pittsy and Ink just cut through the Alpha team like a hot knife through butter. Now they're aiming for Frank Castle's jugular. $2.99

Silver Surfer 8 (Stacy Weiss & Dan Chariton + Lan Medina) Hunted by the authorities, Denise Waters grapples with her daughter's new powers. $2.99

one-shot **Silver Surfer Vol 1: Communion** (Stacy Weiss & Dan Chariton + Milx; tpbk) For single mother Denise Walters, caring for her daughter has been the primary focus of her life – she never imagined becoming embroiled in alien abduction and mankind's possible Armageddon. Collects the critically acclaimed Silver Surfer #1-6. 144pg $14.99

one-shot **Spider-Man/ Doctor Octopus: Negative Exposure** (Brian K. Vaughan & Staz Johnson; tpbk) Spider-Man and long-time foe Doctor Octopus face off once again in a brutal battle of egos! But the deadly Doctor's got a secret weapon up his sleeve. 120pg $13.99

Ultimate Fantastic Four 5 (Brian Michael Bendis & Mark Millar + Adam Kubert) As the first story arc concludes, the fledgling Fantastic Four battle the Mole Man. $2.25

Ultimates Vol 2 #1 (Mark Millar & Bryan Hitch) One year has passed since the Chitauri invasion and much has changed inside the corridors of the Triskelion, leading to questions about Iron Man's health, Thor's position and the relationship between Cap and the Wasp. $2.99

The Ultimates Vol 2: Homeland Security (Mark Millar & Bryan Hitch; tpbk) The team welcomes new members Black Widow, Hawkeye, Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver. Collects The Ultimates Vol 1 #7-13! 200pg $17.99

Venom 13 *(Patterns* 3 of 3; Daniel Way & Francisco Herrera) The true mastermind behind Venom's resurgence steps out of the shadows with the shocking revelation of the suit's origin. $2.99

Weapon X 22 (Frank Tieri & Georges Jeanty) Abandoned and ousted by the organisation he helped to create, the former Director of Weapon X suddenly finds himself face-to-face with the only mutant he has ever feared. $2.99

Wolverine/Punisher 2 (of 5; Peter Milligan & Lee Weeks; *Marvel Knights)* Deep in the South American jungle there's a place of legend – a final refuge for the nastiest of the nasty to disappear. $2.99

X-Statix 22 *(X-Statix vs Avengers* 2 of 5; Peter Milligan & Mike Allred; *Marvel Knights)* Our favourite team is about to square off against Earth's Mightiest Heroes in the rumble of the century so far. $2.99

X-Treme X-Men 46 (Chris Claremont & Igor Kordey) Stand-alone finale, in which a former team-mate returns to the X-Men fold and the X-Treme team find themselves in a state of transition. Will a return to the Xavier Institute mean changes are in store? $2.99

RELEASED AND ON SALE IN

APRIL

Abstract Studio

Strangers In Paradise Vol III 65 (Terry Moore) In the wake of her art world debut, Katchoo finds her paintings are suddenly in demand and women of all ages come out of the woodwork to commission one of her infamous nude portraits. 24pg b&w $2.95

Amaze Ink/ Slave Labor

Comic Book Heaven Vol 2 #10 (Scott Saavedra) Crazed criminals, rude heroes, bad love advice – it's all here! 48pg b&w $3.50

new **Ghouly Boys** 1 (various) From the dead, Zombie Boy rises, and walks with us. Orphaned and alone, he befriends Fat Bat and the two misfits set out together to find their place in the world. 24pg b&w $2.95

Gloomcookie Vol 3 (Serena Valentino & Breehn Burns; tpbk) The drama continues with GloomCookie's third volume, collecting issues #13-17. Mature readers. 144pg b&w ... $15.95

Hsu and Chan 6 (Norm Scott) A first themed issue comes, with big-eyed critters like babies, chipmunks and lizards! 24pg b&w $2.95

one-shot **Hsu and Chan** Vol 1 (Norm Scott; tpbk) The first four issues of the goofballs from the pages of Electronic Gaming Monthly. 128pg b&w $13.95

Serenity Rose 3 (Alex A.) Is Serenity really the only witch in Crestfallen? 24pg b&w $2.95

Antarctic Press

new **Angels 750** #1 (Ted Nomura) Meet the girls of the Angels 750 motorcycle club. Add the all-male rival Tigers 750 motorcycle gang, some tree-huggers, and several sexy female teachers, and you've got trouble! b&w $2.99

new **Dictators: Hitler** 1 (Ted Nomura) Exploration into the mind of one of history's most controversial figures, with an in-depth look into the forces that led a man and his country into madness. b&w $2.99

Dragon Arms: Chaos Blade 4 (David Hutchison) Naga and Stone covet the First Sword, and now they must face each other and the weight of Eon and his majin army for possession of the ancient blade. b&w $2.99

Gold Digger 52 (Fred Perry) Penny and Charlotte visit an ancient Olmec crypt in the Amazon jungles, but discover that a few competitors have already staked claims on sections of the site. $2.99

I Hunt Monsters 2 (Rod Espinosa & Craig Babiar) William must defeat the corrupt and terrifying demon Azmodeus, before the fiend's diabolical plans for Earth succeed. b&w $2.99

Luftwaffe: 1946 Pocket Manga Vol 3 (Ted Nomura & Ben Dunn; tpbk) In June 1944, the Allies storm beaches at Normandy, but with Eisenhower already dead and key German weaponry released early, Normandy isn't won until October. With the delay, two other battles go completely wrong. 120pg b&w ... $9.99

Ninja High School 116 (Katie Bair) Will love between an ill-mannered ninja girl and an inconsiderate from the sea be doomed to failure? Yumei can only hope so! b&w $2.99

Quagmire, USA 2 (Ben Dunn) Bento obsessively trains to learn the Ninja Fist, Kassy is buried in her dangerous transformation chamber experiments, and Jeremy and Asrial have their hands full disciplining them all! b&w ... $2.99

Twilight X Pocket Manga Vol 4 (Joseph Wight; tpbk) When a cold-blooded technocracy reveals itself, Jed and Toots are separated from Richard and Melissa and forced to escape by whatever means necessary. 144pg b&w $9.99

one-shot **You Can Draw Transforming Robots** (Sherard Jackson; tpbk) Contains a spectrum of subjects ranging from assembling basic shapes into re-configurable parts, to applying diverse design philosophies. 192pg b&w $19.95

Archie Comics

Archie Digest 207 (various) The adventures of America's favourite teen continue with new stories and old. $2.39

Betty & Veronica Digest 147 (various) Teen queens Betty & Veronica romp through this collection. $2.39

Betty & Veronica Double Digest 124 (various) Featuring new and old stories. $3.59

Jughead With Archie Digest 192 (various) If you think Archie gets into trouble on his own, check out the action when he teams up with Jughead! $2.39

Jughead's Double Digest 103 (various) Double-decker sandwiches and double-trouble feature as the irrepressible Jughead features in ancient and modern yarns. $3.59

Pals-N-Gals Double Digest 84 (various) Featuring the Archie supporting characters in narratives both hashed and rehashed. $3.59

Sonic The Hedgehog 136 (various) In *The Infiltrator* Sonic looks forward to a well-needed rest after a strenuous, nerve-racking adventure, but gets anything but rest! $2.19

Avatar Press

one-shot **Alan Moore's Hypothetical Lizard Preview** (Alan Moore & Loren Lorente) This preview book shows some of the pages, character designs, and costumes from Lorente as well as the first few pages of Alan Moore's story. 16pg b&w $2.99

Hellina vs Pandora 2 (of 3; Doug Miers & Di Amorim) Hellina leads a fresh army of tens of thousands into an assault on the forces of Scythe, who has found an unexpected ally in Pandora. Mature readers. Variant covers. $3.50

Nightjar 2 (Antony Johnston & Max Fiumara) As the moon rises over

Halloween on Pendle Hill, Mirrigan settles down to spend one last night with her old friend Brian, before starting on the mission to avenge her father. Mature readers. Variant cover. $3.50

new **Warren Ellis' Strange Killings: Necromancer** 1 (Warren Ellis & Mike Wolfer) Something with the hunger for human flesh lurks in the Philippine jungle, a horror whose global political ramifications could shake the British government to its very foundation. Mature. Variant cover. b&w $3.50

Bongo Comics

Bart Simpson 17 (Templeton & Smith) Not only is Bartman back, but he's brought the Bartman Family with him! $2.99

Simpsons Comics 93 (Boothby & Ortiz) Homer forms a volunteer firefighting force with questionable and combustible methods of promoting fire prevention. $2.99

CrossGen

Abadazad 4 (J.M. DeMatteis & Mike Ploog) Who is pulling Kate's strings? Our troubled teen is anxious to find her lost brother, but before her journey truly begins, Mary Annette drags Kate into a village of living puppets! $2.95

Brath 15 (Chuck Dixon & Andrea Di Vito) Brath and Ule hit the open sea – with the Imperial navy hot on their tails! Will the Hammer of Ure become the master and commander of the ocean – or is he all washed up? $2.95

Brian Pulido's Lady Death: The Wild Hunt 3 (Brian Pulido & Jim Cheung) On the run and outnumbered, Lady Death must lead her band of freedom fighters on a perilous journey across Europe. $2.95

El Cazador 6 (Chuck Dixon & Steve Epting) Captain Sin and Redhand Harry finally meet face-to-face – or is that blade-to-blade? The undermanned and outgunned El Cazador is in the fight of its life against Harry Newcomb and his newly refitted ship. $2.95

Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang 4 (Tony Bedard & Mike Perkins) Agent Stephanie Shelley returns to MI6 with a new assignment from the lethal Lazarus Bale: assassinate Director Pilchard! $2.95

Negation War Part Two (Tony Bedard & Paul Pelletier) With Negation invasion fleets overrunning worlds throughout the galaxy, space-soldier Samandahl Rey races against time to unite his fellow Sigil-bearers and mount a counterattack! $2.95

Route 666 22 (Tony Bedard & Karl Moline) Cassie searches for the gateway to Perdition. But what she and her small team find instead is a ghost ship trapped in the ice – its frozen passengers just waiting for a warm body to stop by. $2.95

Sojourn 34 (Ian Edginton & Greg Land) Arwyn must face an entire troop of trolls to free the Iskani leader. $2.95

Way of the Rat 24 (Chuck Dixon & Luke Ross) With Boon nowhere to be found, the Silken Ghost must battle the master of the Ring of Fists. $2.95

DreamWave

Devil May Cry 3 (Brad Mick & Pat Lee) Dante prepares to take on his most powerful foe and fellow Dark Knight Nelo Angelo in a battle to the finish. 40pg $3.95

Duel Masters 6 (Brian Augustyn & Jeremy Tiongson + Morgan Thomas) The beastman warrior Tantaar has one last task to perform to redeem himself, his long dead race and the woman who had been the love of his life. $2.95

Transformers: Energon 22 (Simon Furman & Guido Guidi + Elaine To) Even empowered by the Spark of Combination, Optimus Prime and the Autobots may be too late to stop the Terrorcons' Energon-frenzied rampage across Earth. .. $2.95

Transformers: Armada Vol 3 (Simon Furman; & Guido Guidi + Don Figueroa; tpbk) It is the beginning of the end as a chaotic force from beyond the Armada-verse starts to make its presence felt, dispatching five lethal heralds to soften up both the Autobots and the Decepticons. 184pg $20.95

Transformers: Generation One 4 (Brad Mick & Don Figueroa) After lying dormant the one and only Omega Supreme returns to help save the day. But what dark secret has Omega been guarding for all these years and why did it propel him to leave Cybertron? $2.95

Transformers Armada: More than Meets the Eye 2 (of 3; Adam Patyk + Brad Mick & various) Bios of the respective Autobot and Decepticon leaders, Optimus Prime and Megatron, plus Jetfire, Rhinox, tons of Mini-Cons, and more. 48pg $4.95

Fantagraphics

one-shot **In My Darkest Hour** (Wilfred Santiago; graphic novel) Exploring the inner life of, Omar Guerrero, a 28-year old Latin American transient, who confronts his pervasive feelings of inadequacy, anger, guilt, and escalating alienation. Mature. 128pg $14.95

Krazy and Ignatz Vol 4: 1931-1932 (George Herriman & Chris Ware) Nearly two full years of the Sunday Krazy Kat Comics, between multiple pages of Herriman extras, including two premiere appearances of Krazy from 1909, never before reprinted. 120pg b&w ... $14.95

Prince Valiant Vol 50: Vikings on the Isle of Man (Hal Foster & John Cullen) Arn and two companions are sent on a mission to find out if Vikings are planning to invade the Isle of Man. 64pg $24.95

one-shot **Canvas** (Alex Fellows) *See Close-Up, below.*

Love and Rockets Vol 2 10 (Los Bros Hernandez) In the 20-page final chapter of Jaime's latest *Maggie* serial, a figure rises out of the ashes of Izzy's burned-down house, the demonic black dogs appear again, and Maggie is at the centre of it all. Mature . 56pg b&w $5.95

Raisin Pie 3 (Rick Altergott & Ariel Bordeaux) Characters move into increasingly chilly waters with the *Blessed Be* storyline that continues with mystery, humour, and social commentary. Mature. b&w $3.50

Image Comics

Alternation 3 (F.G. Haghenbeck & Carlos Barberi) Annie Oakley and the Automated Tin Man rescue Billy the Kid and Matthew Henson from the clutches of General Custer's Imperial Army and his T-Rex, Sue. $2.95

new **Bad Ideas** 1 (of 2; Wayne Chinsang & Jim Mahfood + Dave Crosland) Find out what happens when you put two artists and an author together at Wizard World Chicago, and leave them alone with a camera. 48pg b&w $5.95

Bloodstream 3 (of 4; Adam Shaw & Penny Register + Adam Shaw) Dr Evers plans to capture Amber, now a living vessel of the precious Hemosyth technology, at her former place of employment. Mature readers. .. $2.95

Casefiles: Sam & Twitch 12 (Marc Andreyko & Paul Lee; *TMP)* Sam faces ghosts from his past and demons in the present. Will an assassin's bullet change everything or will detectives Burke and Williams prevent even more blood from being spilled? Mature readers. b&w $2.50

Common Grounds 4 (of 6; Rodolfo Migliari & various; *Top Cow)* Dan Jurgens illustrates the overweight superhero support group, while George Pérez takes us inside the superhero reunion. $2.99

The Darkness 10 (Ron Marz & Matt Milla; *Top Cow)* Jackie Estacado, the bearer of the Darkness, has become the head of his mafia family. Now, though, he realises that the mob wars were the least of his problems. $2.99

one-shot **The Darkness/ Hulk** (Paul Jenkins & Matt Milla; *Top Cow)* The Darkness is a violent killer and the Hulk is a violent pacifist. When those two worlds collide who will remain standing? $2.99

Invincible 12 (Robert Kirkman & Ryan Ottley) After the events of last issue, Mark is left wondering how he'll survive. He comes face to face with the most deadly foe of his short-lived superhero career. $2.95

Kabuki: The Alchemy 2 (of 6) (David Mack) After escaping the institution, Kabuki follows Akemi's directions to meet someone who can give her a new identity and a ticket out of the country to evade the Noh. Bimonthly. $2.95

Kane Vol 2: Rabbit Hunt (Paul Grist; tpbk) It's a bad day for Mister Floppsie Whoppsie, New Eden's self-styled Rabbit for Hire. The freelance rabbit business isn't going as well as it should. He's hung over. The rent's due. Collects Kane #5-8. 144pg $12.95

The Last Straw Man 2 (of 3; Jim Krueger & Brett Weldele) Everyone in town is tasting Macreedy's corrupt retribution, and the Last Straw Man is alone, bleeding and dying in a city that's forgotten how to hope. 40pg $3.95

one-shot **Mage Vol 1: The Hero Discovered** (Matt Wagner; hbk) The entire saga is finally collected in one volume featuring an all-new painted cover. 464pg $49.95

new **NYC Mech** 1 (Miles Gunter & Ivan Brandon + Andy MacDonald) Eight million robots walk the streets, but this isn't sc-fi. This is New York City, top to bottom, from a basement in the last Brooklyn ghetto to the clouds above a penthouse suite on Park Avenue. . $2.95

Patient Zero 2 (of 4; John Mclean-Foreman & Brent White) When the Patient Zero covert genetics facility is invaded by a foreign Al Dr Laura Malcom comes face to face with Deighton's nightmare. $2.95

Phantom Jack 2 (Mike Sangiacomo) What would be powerful enough to force reporter Jack Baxter to return to Baghdad, the city of his most shameful defeat? Family. $2.95

Powers Vol 2 #2 (Brian Michael Bendis & Michael Avon Oeming) The world's gone straight to hell, and the villains are running rampant. We need a hero. Mature readers. $2.95

Rex Mundi 11 (Arvid Nelson & Eric J) Julien, a prisoner of the Inquisition, finds an unexpected ally, and at long last recovers the stolen medieval scroll. $2.95

Savage Dragon Vol 6: Gang War (Erik Larsen) OverLord is dead, and a void needs to be filled. Enter the villainous vermin that dwell in the Windy City. Collects Savage Dragon #22-26. 144pg .. $49.95

Something Wicked 4 (of 4; various) Silas and Abe find themselves with nowhere to run and nowhere to hide as the Messengers of Hate, Team Freedom and Jeremy all converge upon Erieside Manor. b&w $2.95

Spawn 145 (Brian Holguin + Todd McFarlane & Angel Medina; *TMP)* In order to conquer a timeless evil, Spawn must fulfill a centuries-old oath. But his actions lead to a rift in time, sending the Dark Ages spilling over into the 21st century. $2.50

new **Strykeforce** 1 (of 5; Jay Faerber & Tyler Kirkham + Marlo Alquiza; *Top Cow)* The team is hired by a recently widowed woman whose young son has mysteriously vanished. But the harder they look for the boy, the more obvious it becomes that some people don't want him found. $2.99

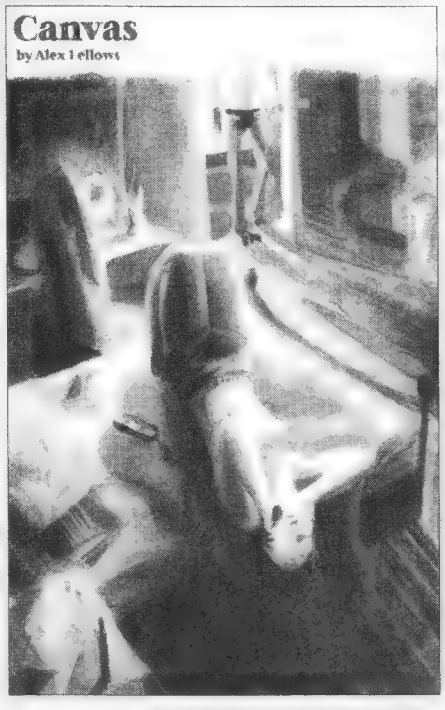
Tomb Raider 41 *(Tower of Souls* 1 of 2; James Bonny & Wilson Tortosa + Tyson Wengler; *Top Cow)* Lara Croft travels to the Irish countryside to search for a legendary talisman believed to be buried beneath a medieval castle – a place which, centuries ago, was the scene of bloodshed and unspeakable tortures. $2.99

The Walking Dead 7 (Robert Kirkman & Tony Moore) Winter has come and the decision is made to move the camp to a safer area. With such harsh weather conditions, Rick and company realize the zombies all around them are the least of their worries. Mature readers. b&w $2.95

one-shot **The Walking Dead, Vol 1: Days Gone Bye** (Robert Kirkman & Tony Moore; tpbk) A couple of months ago Rick Grimes was a small town cop who had never fired a shot and only ever saw one dead body. Separated from his family he must now sort through the death and confusion to try and find his wife and son. Collects The Walking Dead #1-6. Mature readers. 144pg b&w $9.95

one-shot **The Wanted Dossier** (Mark Millar & various; *Top Cow)* The secrets behind Wanted's bevy of baddies are revealed with text by Millar and illustrations by over a dozen of comics' greatest artists. Mature readers. $2.99

Witchblade 75 (Wohl & Manapul; *Top Cow)* It's Sara Pezzini versus Ian Nottingham in a battle of wills – and Witchblades – and someone's not making it out alive! $2.99



close-up

Canvas

Fantagraphics

Writer/Artist: Alex Fellows

During a weekend camping trip, Canvas, a 14-year old girl born to a pig and a frog, suffers the attraction of two young guys, goes on a shocking double date, and gets drunk for the first time. Her parents, despite their odd appearance, have a very typical fear of their daughter's new experiences. This is the tale of a teenage girl making decisions based on the only quality she's had time to develop: curiosity. Mature readers. 80pg b&w $9.95

ON SALE APRIL

Moonstone

new **Monte Michael Moore's Bloodlines** 1 (Monte Michael Moore) Sexy sci-fi tale of politics, murder, revenge, and vampiric family ties set in a brutally decaying city on the verge of destruction. $3.50

Kolchak: Tales of the Night Stalker 3 (various) Kolchak and a beautiful young Real Estate agent go into an abandoned old house infested with flesh-eating little beasties. Mature readers. $3.50

one-shot **The Robin Hood** Vol 1 (various; tpbk) Includes Robin Hood and the Minstrel, a version of how Alan-a-Dale joins the Merry Men. 150pg b&w $15.95

Silencers 4 (Fred Van Lente + Steve Ellis & D.L. Yoo) The Silencers discover that the superdrug flooding the streets, Black Kiss, is of extraterrestrial origin, and their mob war with the Syndicate goes intergalactic! Mature $3.50

one-shot **Slamm! The Hardboiled Fiction of CJ Henderson** (CJ Henderson & various) Bounty hunters, sex addicts, vampires, and more, set

against backdrops of revenge, defiance, and urban madness. Mature readers. 96pg b&w $10.95

Oni Press

new **Blue Monday: Painted Moon** 1 (Chynna Clugston-Major) Bleu Finnegan is all pent up with teenage lust. Whatever can be done to assuage her desires amidst the dorky boys she laughingly calls her peers? Mature readers. b&w $2.99

Deep Sleeper 3 (of 4; Phil Hester & Mike Huddleston) Things just keep getting weirder for Cole. These things that are happening to him can't be real. They're the things that happen in nightmares or scary movies – but something inside him knows that this isn't just his imagination. Mature readers. b&w $3.50

Hopeless Savages Vol 2: Ground Zero (various; tpbk) Relive adolescent romance as Zero falls for Ginger, only to have the rug yanked out from under her. Mature readers. 128pg b&w $11.95

new **Love Fights** Vol 1 (Andi Watson; tpbk) Collects the first six issues of the series. Features all the superhero hi-jinx and broken hearts in Watson's inimitable style. Mature readers. 168pg b&w $14.95

Love Fights 9 (Andi Watson) Jack's paranoia about Nora and the Flamer has had an unexpected result. Mature readers. b&w $2.99

one-shot **Once In a Blue Moon** Vol 1 (Nunzio DeFilippis; graphic novel) *See Close-Up, above.*

Queen & Country 24 (Greg Rucka & Mike Hawthorne) The Minders are not supposed to conduct operations on British soil, and when David Kinney finds out that that's exactly what they're doing, he's determined to make things a difficult for Paul Crocker and his agents! Mature readers. b&w $2.99

Tokyopop

Ai Yori Aoshi Vol 3 (of 9; Kou Fumizuki; graphic novel) Kaoru has to keep his engagement to Aoi a secret, struggle with his contempt for his family and do his best to avoid tripping into the numerous breasts (sic) that surround him. Mature readers. 224pg b&w $9.99

new **Arm of Kannon** Vol 1 (of 8; Masakuza Yamaguchi; graphic novel) The archeologist Tozo Mikami discovers an ancient Buddhist relic, The Arm of Kannon, an object of strange and mystical power. 200pg b&w $9.99

BTX Vol 3 (of 16; Masami Kurumada; graphic novel) Teppei and X have faced many dangers in their journey to rescue Teppei's brother. Now, they must tackle their toughest opponent yet – each other! 192pg b&w $9.99

Chronicles of the Cursed Sword Vol 6 (Yeo Beop-Ryong & Park Hui-Jin; graphic novel) As Rey's training nears completion, a new enemy emerges, one who wields the PaChun sword with a ferocious might. 176pg b&w $9.99

new **Crescent Moon** Vol 1 (of 6; Haruko Iida; graphic novel) Mahiru Shiraishi is haunted by images of the Descendent of the Princess in a disturbing recurring dream. 184pg b&w $9.99

one-shot **Doll** (Mitsukazu Mihara; hbk) In these stories, dolls have an uncanny way of working themselves into the lives of their masters. A woman develops an unusual closeness to doll that will affect her human family from beyond the grave, and a man wants to make his doll into the perfect human lover, but discovers that humans are not perfect. 192pg b&w $19.99

Dragon Hunter Vol 6 (Hong-Seock Seo; graphic novel) Myung- Ho's sister Aranseur sets out to recruit Seur-Chong to hunt the Blue Dragon of Mount Back-Doo. 192pg $9.99

new **Faeries' Landing** Vol 1 (of 13; You Hyun; graphic novel) A chance encounter with a mysterious character named Goodfellow leads Ryang to a town called Fairies Landing. 176pg b&w $9.99

Faeries' Landing Vol 2 (of 13; You Hyun; graphic novel) Ryang and Ganji, Ryang's third evil affinity, take centre stage as their relationship hits high drama. 176pg b&w $9.99

Faeries' Landing Vol 3 (of 13; You Hyun; graphic novel) Samteak tells Fanta the story behind Ryang's first kiss. Worried, Fanta feels that yet another one of Ryang's relationships is doomed to failure! 176pg b&w $9.99

Fake Vol 7 (Sanami Matoh; graphic novel) With Dee and Ryo's love life on permanent simmer, Ryo doesn't know what to do. Diana finally offers some advice. Mature. 168pg b&w $9.99

Eerie Queerie Vol 2 (Shuri Shiozu; graphic novel) During a school trip, Mitsuo and his classmates stay at an old Japanese-style hotel, where he gets nonstop hiccups. A mysterious old woman working at the hotel tells him that a person who hiccups 100 times dies. 184pg b&w $9.99

Girl Got Game Vol 3 (of 10; Shizuru Seino; graphic novel) Enter Tsuyaka Himejima. She transferred to Kyo's new high school so that she could finally play basketball with her again. She is very disappointed to discover that Kyo is currently a boy. 192pg b&w $9.99

new **Gundam Seed Astray** Vol 1 (of 2; Tomohiro Chiba & Koichi Tokita; graphic novel) During a routine mission, a salvage team inadvertently discovers a top-secret mobile suit known as Red Frame. 188pg b&w $9.99

Jing: King of Bandits Vol 6 (Yuichi Kumakura; graphic novel) The sky is the limit when Jing and Kir end up on cloud nine after stealing a map of Fuzzy Navel. 216pg b&w $9.99

Kill Me, Kiss Me Vol 2 (of 5; Lee Young Yuu; graphic novel) As Jung-Woo journeys home from a hard day impersonating his female cousin at an all-girls school, a gang of bellicose babes confront him, and these girls don't just want to have fun. b&w $9.99

new **Lament of the Lamb** Vol 1 (Kei Toume; graphic novel) Kazuna Takashiro can't escape the pain of his past. Ever since his mother died, nightmares and visions have been eating away at him. When he finds his long-lost sister, Chizuna, the two discover they share more than just a family name. 216pg b&w $9.99

new **Mahoromatic: Automatic Maiden** Vol 1 (of 6; Bunjuro Nakayama & Bow Ditama; graphic novel) Suguru Misato would love a little companionship, not to mention someone to deal with the stacks of dishes and the ever present family of dust bunnies. Enter Mahoro, a retired battle android who has been reprogrammed for the domestic life. Mature readers. 184pg b&w $9.99

new **Model** Vol 1 (Lee So-young; graphic novel) Ji Ye is a Korean art student who comes to Europe to study. One evening her friend brings a drunk man over to crash at her pad. That night she has bad dreams that the drunk is really a blood-sucking vampire. b&w $9.99

Pita-Ten Vol 3 (of 8; Koge Donbo; tpbk) Kotarou Higuchi has always had the ability to see spirits. But after an encounter with a mysterious new neighbour, he begins to have the ability to see other visions. 208pg b&w $9.99

Psychic Academy Vol 2 (Katsu Aki; graphic novel) Ai is pretty confident about the academic part of the upcoming exams, but as for the psychic tests, let's just say his head is spinning. 192pg b&w $9.99

Saiyuki Vol 2 (of 9; Kazuya Minekura; graphic novel) Continuing their journey west and leaving a trail of dead Youkai in their wake, Genjo Sanzo and company come upon a young woman who has quite a tale to tell. b&w $9.99

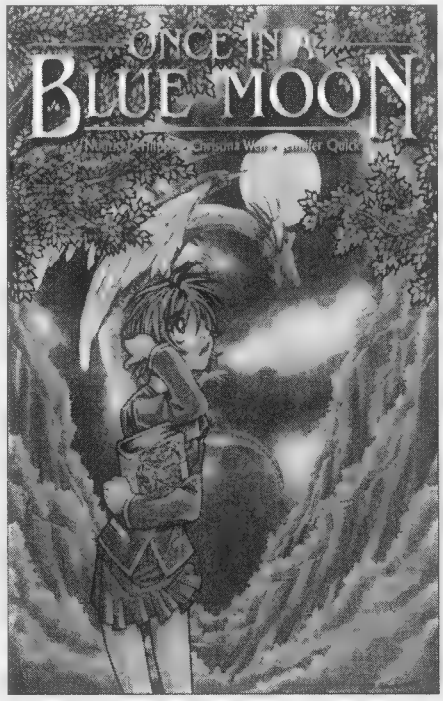
Sgt Frog Vol 2 (of 6; Mine Yoshizaki; graphic novel) Fuyuki Hinata must have incurred the wrath of God because he's been stricken with having to go to school with his sister Natsumi. 188pg b&w $9.99

Snow Drop Vol 3 (of 12; Choi Kyung-ah; graphic novel) Hayden and Sana's relationship continues to grow and develop – but it won't last if Sue has any say. Mature readers. b&w $9.99

new **Suikoden III** Vol 1 (of 4; Shimizu Aki; graphic novel) Chris Lightfellow knows the horror of war – her father succumbed in the flames of battle when she was just a little girl. Now, wanting to become a soldier like him, she enters a military school and becomes a knight after graduating. 176pg b&w $9.99

new **Tokyo Babylon** Vol 1 (of 7; CLAMP; graphic novel) A modern-day fantasy that follows Subaru Sumeragi, a young omyouji (spiritual medium) on his quest to protect Tokyo from the evil spirits that have taken residence in the city. 144pg b&w $9.99

new **Transformers: Energon Cinemanga** Vol 1 (of 3; various; graphic novel) Unicron, a vast, planet-sized menace, recruits the evil Decepticons to help him regain his former power by extracting Energon from Earth. 96pg b&w $7.99



close-up

Once in a Blue Moon

Oni Press

Writer/Artist: Nunzio DeFilippis

Aeslin had a magical childhood capped by a new world to explore every night before bed. The Avalon Chronicles were the perfect tuck-in tale, and her parents enjoyed reading the fantastic fables as much as she liked listening to them. Now Aeslin is a teenager, and the magic is gone... until she finds herself magically transported into the book of her youth! 152pg b&w $11.95

ON SALE APRIL

INTERNATIONAL

Black Library

Warhammer Monthly 80 (variant) The crew of war machine Imperius Dictatio unleash hell on a hostile planet in the last episode of Dan Abnett's *Titan*. 40pg b&w $3.50

com.x

Cla$$war 5 (Rob Williams & Travel Foreman) The war on Glenada explodes as US troops find themselves thrust into the heart of the battle. Mature. ... $3.50

The Last American (Alan Grant + John Wagner & Mick McMahon; tpbk) United States Army Captain Ulysses S. Pilgrim awakes from 20 years in cryogenic suspension to find a changed world; nuclear war has ravaged all that he knew. He's been charged with restoring order. But first he must search for his fellow survivors... Collects the 1990 miniseries. Plus extra features. Mature. 132pg $19.99

UK NEWSSTAND

DC Thomson

The Beano 3203-3207 (weekly; various) Classic kids humour anthology featuring Dennis the Menace, the Bash Street Kids, and all your favourites. £0.55

Beano Superstars 147 (various) One complete strip of the long-running humour anthology. 36pg £0.65

Classics From The Comics 93 (various) Anthology reprinting classic cartoon strips from DC Thomson's vintage kids' comics Beano and Dandy. 68pg b&w £1.20

Commando Action And Adventure Stories 3670-3777 (eight per month; digest; various) Featuring one self-contained comic strip per issue. Some new material. 68pg b&w £1.00

Fun-Size Beano 155-156 (fortnightly; various) Pocket-sized spin-off from the Beano featuring Dennis the Menace, and all the usual suspects. 68pg £0.60

Panini Comics

Action Man 94 (four-weekly; various) All-new soldier adventure yarns, plus quizzes and prizes based on the action figure. 28pg £1.50

Astonishing Spider-Man 107 (four-weekly; various; Marvel UK) Official UK outing for US Marvel comic adventures, with free posters and extras. 76pg £2.40

Avengers United 37 (various) Fast-paced action from Marvel's largest superhero team including the Hulk, Captain America, Iron Man, Hawkeye and the Scarlet Witch. £2.40

Doctor Who Magazine 341 (four-weekly; various) Contains celebrity interviews, feature articles and original stories based on everybody's favourite doc. 52pg £3.30

Essential X-Men 110 (four-weekly; various; Marvel UK) More modern and classic action with Marvel's mightiest mutants. 76pg £2.40

Powerpuff Girls Powerzine 22 (various) Comicstrips and fun, entertaining and humorous features presented by the three superheroines, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup. £1.75

Scooby Doo 10 (various) Regular vanquishing of baddies who, frankly would have got away with it if it weren't for those pesky kids. Also contains competitions, activities, quizzes and more! £1.99

Spectacular Spider-Man 94 (various) New comic strips and games. Plus a bunch of free posters and a competition. 36pg £1.50

Transformers Armada 11 (various) Original UK comic strip, data files, cyber-puzzles, competitions and more. .. £1.75

Ultimate Spider-Man 26 (various; Marvel UK) Tells a tale of Spider-Man, retold with modern-day computer enhanced artwork. £1.95

Ultimate X-Men 12 (various; Marvel UK) Reveals the incredible origins of Cyclops, Marvel Girl, Storm, Beast, Colossus and Iceman. £1.95

Wolverine & Gambit 96 (four-weekly; various; Marvel UK) Compiles US Marvel's own brand of Wolverine comic strips plus magazine-style feature articles on the tortured lupine one. 76pg .. £2.40

Rebellion

2000 AD #1384-1386 (various) Judge Dredd leads a crack squad to rescue prisoners of war in *Gulag*, Durham Red faces off for the final time against the Offspring, and Genetic Infantryman Rogue Trooper is out to assassinate a war marshal in *Realpolitik*. $3.75

Judge Dredd Megazine 218 (various) Judge Dredd meets a Cursed Earth Auxiliary with a grudge against the New Mutant Army in *Damned Ranger*, and rutting rodents run riot in the Mega-City in *Whatever Happened To The Griblings?*. 100pg $10.99

Q&A

345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ

Baffle us with comics questions, or save us with answers!

Ultimate JLA Guide

Peter Sidebotham
13a Wallworths Bank
Congleton, Cheshire CW12 3DP

WAS the **Ultimate Guide to the Justice League of America** ever published? I've been trying to aquire a copy for ages!

*Mike Conroy: Yep, it hit the streets from Dorling-Kindersley in 2002. Try asking for **JLA: The Ultimate Guide** the title under which it was ultimately published.*

Dez Skinn adds: The author of the book was Scott Beatty (who also wrote the Batman DK guide), with new art by Roger Stewart. It's a bit steep, at $19.99 for only 96 pages, so check out amazon.com for discounted copies. But be warned, as the title states, it's a JLA guide, as in the Morrison 1990s incarnation. You'll find it a bit disappointing if you're interested in the earlier versions.

Crossover confusion

Peter Thomson
Hastings, West Sussex TN35 4LS

CAN you please clear something up for me? A friend of mine and I are currently disagreeing over whether or not there was ever a Marvel/DC crossover comic featuring Swamp Thing and Man-Thing. I'm convinced this was never published, but, being a bit of a Swamp freak I'd love to know who is correct.

And do you think Marvel will ever bring back Man-Thing?

New Q&A Brains Trust recruit Steve Turner replies (because he was in the office at the time): Looks like you win, Pete. There has never been a crossover between the two moss-encrusted characters. As for a Man-Thing revival, check out Mike's F2F on page 22 for news of an imminent movie release, which should mean a comic title will follow.

Time and space trip

Roger Newson
32 Rosemary Avenue
Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 9HX

CAN you tell me anything about a strip I remember from sometime in the 1970s? It was a black and white British comics strip (possibly in **Buster**) featuring a space/time-travelling fairground boxing booth and a character who drove a floating space-travelling car.

Roger, hope you don't mind us asking but in the 1970s you didn't indulge in certain consciousness-expanding substances by any chance, did you?

Ghost Special

Roger Newson
32 Rosemary Avenue
Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 9HX

AS A kid in the 1970s I was given a British hardback annual entitled **Ghost Special**, but that's about all I can remember about it.

Does anyone have any background information?

*Dez Skinn replies: Unbelievably, yes. I just dug out my old scrapbook on a hunch and confirmed that it is the same one. It was produced by Byblos in the mid-1970s (1975, at a stab) by Stuart Wales and me. We used to editorially package **Junior Quizzer** for the same publisher, David Kay, and did the **Ghost Annual** as a oneshot. There was this great story I've just remembered. He called us up – two naive young and hungry IPC subs – to his office to discuss the title.*

He offered us a packaging fee but said if it sold over 40,000 we'd be on a royalty. It was to be printed in Finland by a company with an unpronounceable name, so he gave us their quote to note their full details. Doing so, I spotted the print run being quoted on, 35,000. Nice once, David.

"The House on Moonlight Hill" was one of my literary contributions, according to a faded carbon copy.

Ultimate Panini

Peter Sidebotham
13a Wallworths Bank
Congleton, Cheshire CW12 3DP

CAN we expect a third Ultimate title from Panini Comics in the near future (ie: **The Ultimates**)?

*Steve Turner chips in again: Doubt it. The **Ultimates** material's a bit too "mature audience" for UK newsagents but with **Ultimate Fantastic Four** now out in the States, that's a likelier contender.*

Brit revival

Peter Sidebotham
13a Wallworths Bank
Congleton, Cheshire CW12 3DP

I HEARD a rumour that something was going to be done with old British characters – Kelly's Eye, Robot Archie, Spider, etc. Have you heard anything about this?

No. You?

In the beginning...

Eleni K via e-mail:
elen5517@hotmail.com

WHAT was the first comic that was created?

*It would probably be the UK's 1874-1894 **Funny Folks**, the success of which inspired engraver and publisher Gilbert Dalziel to bring out the more famous Victorian comic, **Ally Sloper's Half Holiday** (1884-1916).*

*Ten years later, US publisher Charles Scribner's Sons (New York) compiled a hardback collection of **Harper's Monthly** A. B. Frost strips and cartoons (1884; $1.50), calling the end product **Stuff and Nonsense**. An ignoble launch for US comicbooks!*

Wooden Robots?

Jeremy Way
120 Brighton Rd, Purley CR8 4DB

I HAVE often wondered about putting the following into the *Classified* section. It is so vague you might think it a complete waste of time but I would appreciate your thoughts.

If I was submitting copy it would be: Can anyone help? As a child in the early '60s I owned (until my mother threw it away) a colour American comic (Marvel/DC style) and I wish to purchase a copy of it. It was about a metal robot who I seem to recall had magnetic powers and turned out to be a baddy and a wooden(!) robot was built to defeat it. Any ideas what this is? Does someone out there have a copy?

You can see this is very vague but perhaps someone can help?

Kryptonite bullets

Gerry O'Keeffe via e-mail:
xemnuthetitan@hotmail.com

I'VE got a question for you that has been bugging me for the last couple of years. Hopefully you or someone out there can help. I remember back in the '70s reading a Superman story where he's shot by a kryptonite bullet.

The only other part of the story I remember is the Man of Steel flying through an underground cavern when this occurs. It was obviously **Action Comics** or **Superman**, but which issue?

Maybe it never occurred and I'm delusional. Can anybody help?

Doctor Who's slugs

Robert Menzies
10 Cumnock Drive
Barrhead, Glasgow G78 2HT

THIS is not actually a comicbook query but since many comics fans are also Doctor Who fans, can anyone help me identify the following episodes?

They date from Tom Baker's time as the Doctor in the 1970s. The plot is set on a circular space station and people are changing into what I remember as man-size, crawling slugs. It scared the living daylights out of me as a very young child. Just to push my luck further, any info on whether these episodes are available on videotape?

Steve Turner strikes again: The Doctor Who episodes you're referring to are from 1975's 4-part The Ark in Space. *The Doctor arrives on the afore-mentioned satellite to find the Earth's survivors in cryogenic suspension alongside a gigantic dead insect. This 'Queen of the Wirrn', a sworn enemy of Earth, has infiltrated the Ark and spawned some Wirrn larvae.*

The Doctor attempts to stop the lavae from turning into full blown insects and destroying the human race.

As far as finding the video, it may prove hard to come by as it was last released on cassette in 1994. There was a DVD re-release in 2002, but if you're adamant on finding the video try Infinity, a friendly and knowledgeable Doctor Who stockist with a comprehensive back catalogue.

You can contact them on 0774 283 5333 or through the web at www.brightoninfinity.co.uk

Atlas Comics

Peter Thomson, Hastings, West Sussex TN35 4LS

CAN you tell me when the American comics company Atlas ceased publishing? Which of its characters were the most popular?

Mike Conroy replies: Atlas ceased in mid-1975, just 10 months after it started. In that time it published 65 colour comics, six black and white comics magazines and five text periodicals.

The answer to the second question is probably "none of 'em" but I suppose the fact that The Scorpion resurfaced at Marvel shortly after series creator Howard Chaykin quit the title – following a disagreement over creative control – makes the pulp hero the winner by default.

Reworked and renamed Dominic Fortune by Chaykin, he didn't fare much better at his new abode.

Dez Skinn adds: The cheeky thing about Atlas (or Seaboard Publications, to use their proper name) was its blatent attempt to pass itself of as another Marvel. Editor-in-chief was Larry Lieber, not afraid to mention being Stan Lee's younger brother. Publisher was Martin Goodman, who set the company up within a year of selling Marvel Comics to Cadence Industries and was eager to get a line of titles out. Perhaps too eager, as all suffered from being rushed and wildly derivative. Not that The Brute, Tarantula and Sgt Stryker were at all like The Hulk, Spider-Man and Sgt Fury... Much.

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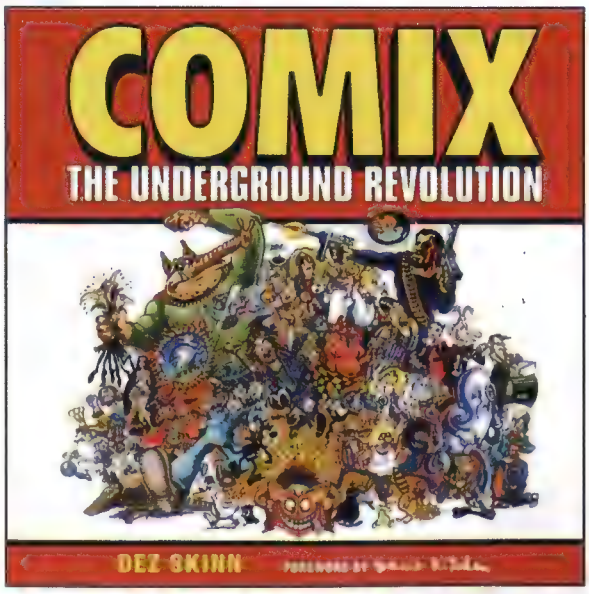

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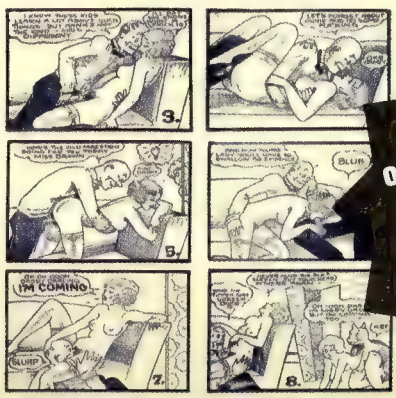
COMIX THE UNDERGROUND REVOLUTION — TIJUANA BIBLES

Tijuana Bibles

America's forbidden funnies from the '30s to the '50s

The Tijuana Bibles have acquired a legendary status as arguably the earliest form of US underground comix and certainly the most outrageous. Anonymously produced from the 1930s through to the 1950s, they were cigarette-packet sized eight page booklets, running one comic strip picture a page, dedicated to poking fun at every icon imaginable. Breaking both sexual taboos and legal copyrights—with it taking almost 50 years of litigation to prove them protected by the First Amendment—they parodied almost 1000 subjects. From Adolf Hitler and Al Capone to The Marx Brothers and Mickey Mouse.

Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein summed them up by saying: "Sex can be seen as absurd and comical. The Tijuana Bibles have a charming, harmless naughtiness that portrays a hidden side of their era."



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COMIX THE UNDERGROUND REVOLUTION

The Maus that RAWed

In 1974 Art Spiegelman said, "As an art form, the comic strip is barely past its infancy. So am I. Maybe we'll grow up together." In 1992 his **Maus** *graphic novel won him a Pulitzer Prize.*

Art Spiegelman, the man behind the ground-breaking anthology **RAW**, the Raffo of comics, is internationally renowned for his magnum opus, **Maus**.

First serialised in **RAW** from issue two (1980) it gave a compelling and deeply moving account of Vladek—Spiegelman's father—and his experiences as a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps.

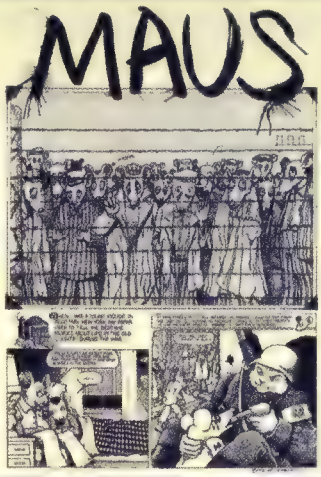
The children of those who survived the Holocaust carry the task of untangling and comprehending what happened and then passing on their parent's often confusing and distressing stories to further generations. Spiegelman used his talents and intuition to brilliantly achieve such a goal.

Maus had its origins in 1972 when Spiegelman wrote and drew the gut-wrenching 4-page strip *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*. It was published a year later in Ross Frese's underground anthology **Short Order Comics #1**, alongside work by Rick Griffin and Robert Crumb.

Spiegelman had previously been well known as comix' radio rebel, producing such strips as Jelly Jazz *Jack-Off* ("It's a treat to beat your meat in the Mississippi mud") for 1960's **Gothic Blimp Works #7**.

But in the 70s his work took on a more meaningful and personal tone. Using his position to publicly display the complexities he faced through being a child of a Holocaust survivor, Spiegelman's *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* told of the suicide of his mother in 1968 and the tremendous guilt he felt because of it. But knowing how to deal with his feelings or how to respond to his parents and their convoluted personalities, in the comic he narrates a situation where he blames his mother for killing him with her suicide and reveals his father's tirades.

The text also touches on the themes of his father's *Jewishness* and his terrible memories that Holocaust survivors all had to bear. Far from traditional content for underground comix, both would be major



FACING PAGE: Spiegelman's self-effacing self portrait.

ABOVE: From behind the mask, Art Spiegelman.

RIGHT: Alongside Captain Fisticuffs, Stanley the Pig and other outright homour strips, Maus made its incongruous first appearance as a three page strip in Ajax Nonsoline Funny Animals (1972). The comic was edited by Terry Zwigoff, better known for his *Crumb* movie.

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COMIX THE UNDERGROUND REVOLUTION — TAKING THE MICKEY

Taking the Mickey

One comic incurred the wrath of corporate America in 1973. Disney won more than $1 million in damages over the defiling of Mickey Mouse's "innocent delightfulness" as a horny doper.

THE GENERAL public don't pay too much attention to the attacks underground comix made on its cultural totems. Nobody outside of the underground took much of it seriously. After all, these cartoonists were rebels, they were wanting to shock everybody by being outrageous so it was expected of them. Then one madcap bunch overstepped the mark.

As insensitive as much of the industry's sex, drugs and violence-laden work was by today's standards, few got into hot water. Then, in 1971 a San Francisco collective of talented artists decided to mess with a multi-national known for its religious nature.

When Mickey Mouse was portrayed having oral sex with Minnie, Disney was not amused. The two issue story also had the pair involved in the illegal drugs trade and Donald Duck and Goofy featured as people long known as the Nameless Perverts. The Air Pirates group was responsible for the deed.

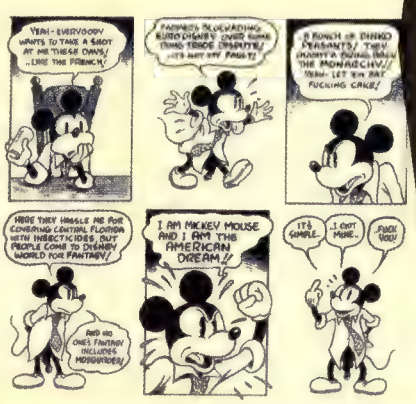
Led by *Odd Bodkins* creator Dan O'Neill (very behind the Mickey and Minnie two-parter), they included Gary Hallgren (Nameless Perverts) Hologram, Bobby London and Ted Richards—whose Dopin' Dan was introduced in their first novel of **Air Pirates Funnies**.

Disney struck back. Its lawyers hunted down the Pirates and hit them with an injunction, stopping distribution of the first two issues and production of any more. Disney also began a massive lawsuit.

When the Pirates declared a 1975 offer of an out of court settlement, a Californian judge ruled in Disney's favour, determining it a clear case of copyright infringement. In 1978 a US Supreme Court refused to hear the collective's appeal and upheld the lower court's decision.

But O'Neill wouldn't quit. He joined the Moose Liberation Front and in defiance of the court ruling spoofed many Disney characters for a 1979 issue of *Celebration Quarterly*.

For this, he was threatened with a jail sentence in 1980. So he finally cut his losses, agreeing to cease and desist.


YEAH - EVERYBODY WANTS TO TAKE A SHOT AT ME THESE DAYS, ..LIKE THE FRENCH!
FACINET'S ALLEVIATING AUTO DISNEY OWNS SOME FUNKY TOXIC DISPUTE! ..IT'S NOT MY FAULT!
A BUNCH OF DRUNK PEASANTS THEY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THE MONARCHY!! YEAH- LET 'EM EAT FUCKING CAKE!
HERE THEY HASSLE ME FOR COVERING CENTRAL FLORIDA WITH INSECTICIDES, BUT PEOPLE COME TO DISNEY WORLD FOR FANTASY!
AND SO ONE'S FANTASY INCLUDES MOSQUITOES!
I AM MICKEY MOUSE AND I AM THE AMERICAN DREAM!!
IT'S SIMPLE..
I DON'T MIND..
BACK YOU!

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11 key features spotlighting:

TIJUANA BIBLES
Groundbreaking pre-war porno pamphlets featuring America's forbidden funnies

TAKING THE MICKEY
Disney not amused: Air Pirates sued for $1m over portraying the mouse as a horny doper

POLITIX OF COMIX
From Chris (Ogoth) Welch's **Introduction to Chile** to **Jesus meets the Armed Services**

plus... THE TWO LIVES OF FRITZ THE CAT - POP GOES THE ARTIST - ARTHOUSE COMIX CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE - THOSE F*ING CATS - THE MAUS THAT RAWED *... and even more magic moments!*

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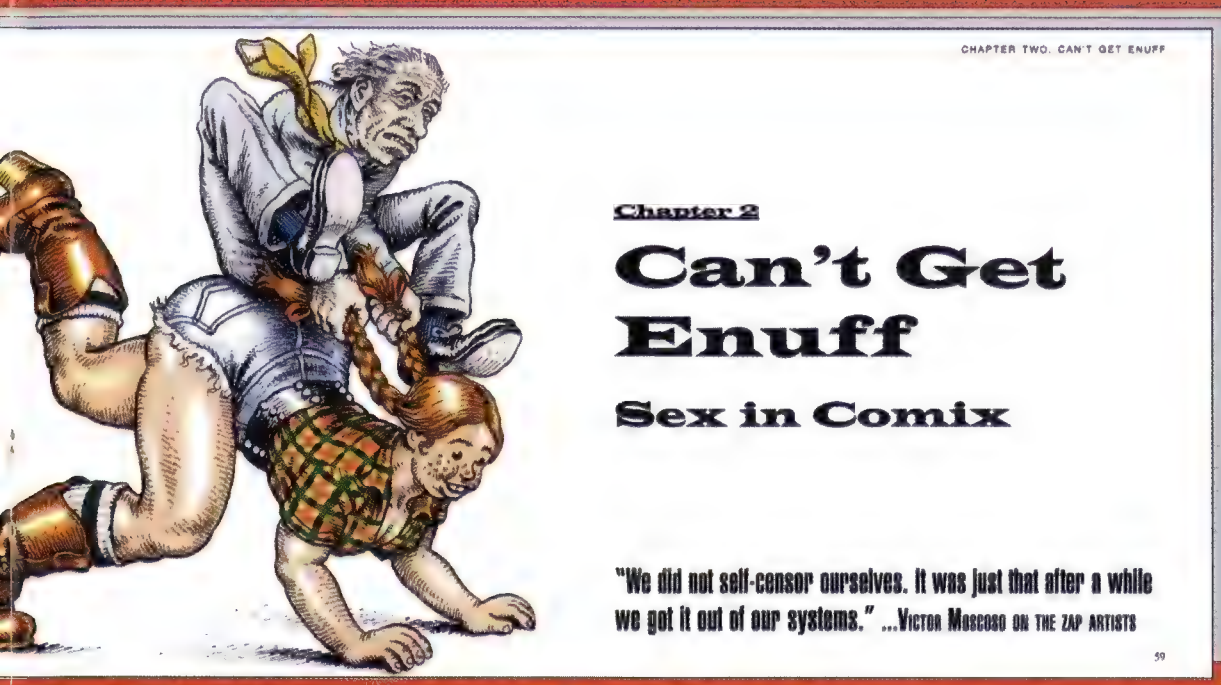
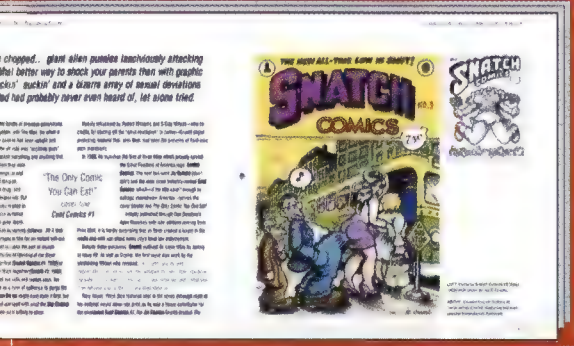
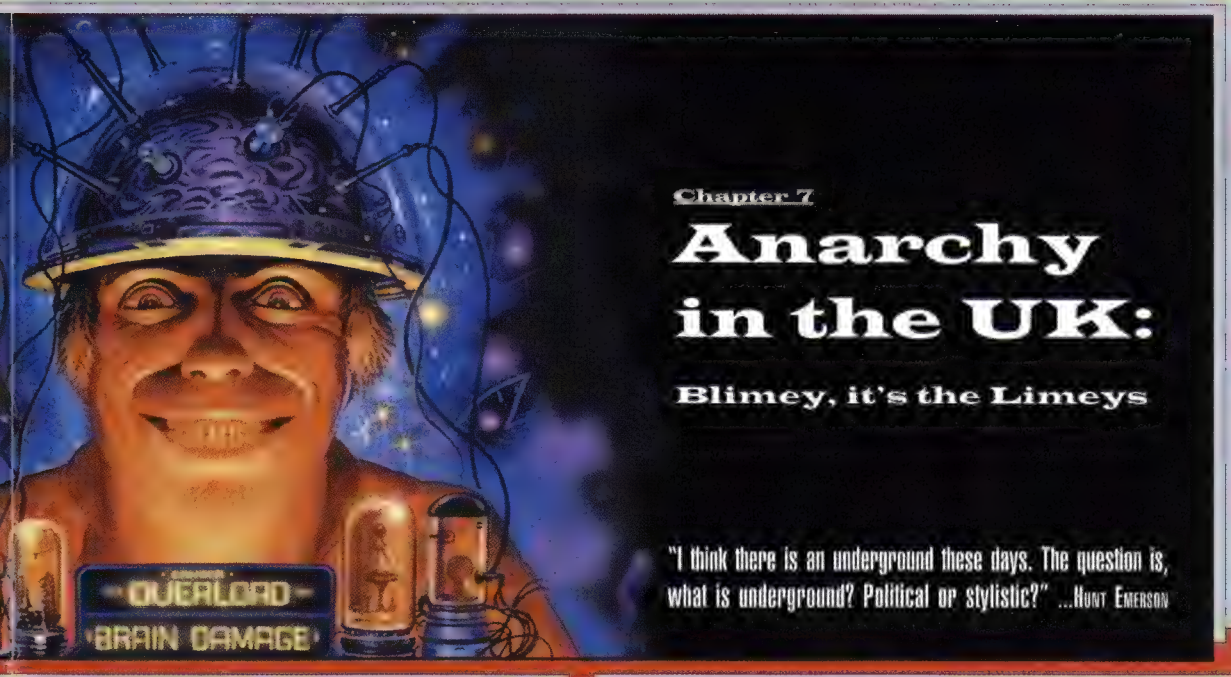
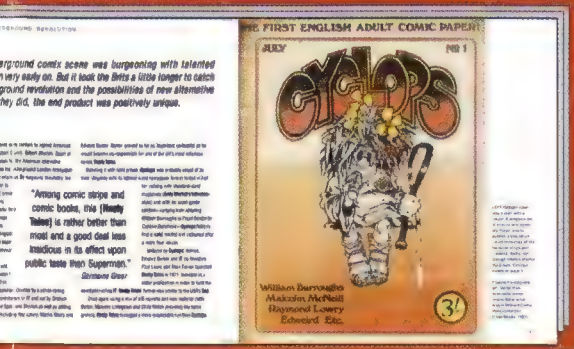
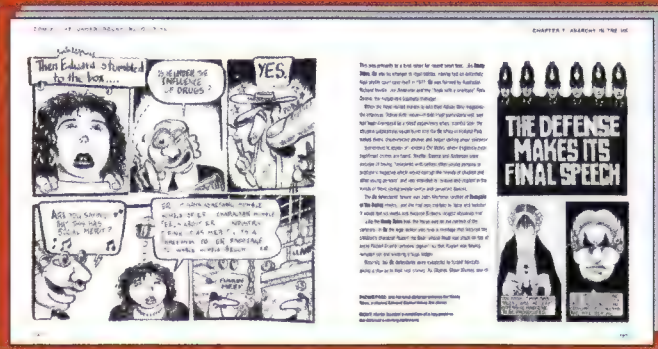

CHAPTER TWO: CAN'T GET ENUFF
Chapter 2
Can't Get Enuff
Sex in Comix
"We did not self-censor ourselves. It was just that after a while we got it out of our systems." ...Victor Moscoso on the zap artists
59




OVERLORD
BRAIN DAMAGE
Chapter 7
Anarchy in the UK:
Blimey, it's the Limeys
"I think there is an underground these days. The question is, what is underground? Political or stylistic?" ...Hunt Emerson





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Disgusted by male cartoonist misogyny, sisters start doing it for themselves.

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An in-depth look at Brit undergrounds. From Cyclops in Northern Lights via Oz, Viz, Knockabout and Lord Horror.

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Where have all the flower children gone? What came of the heroes of the revolution?

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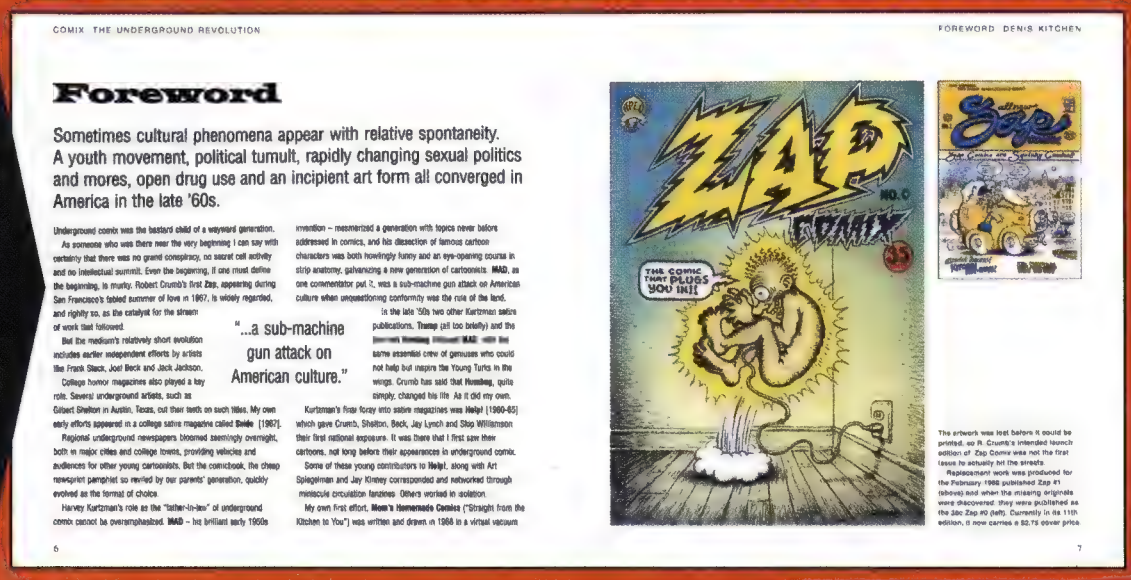
Keeping the rebel flag flying in the 21st century. The power of today's indies.

there's even more. Do a quick PTO and check out another wedge of good stuff...

Foreword by DENIS KITCHEN

A talented writer/artist, Kitchen is also the publisher of such underground gems as **Bizarre Sex** and **Home Grown Funnies**, and has been one of the industry's key figures for over 35 years.

In addition, the book features input from such luminaries as comix first lady Trina Robbins, plus Brit artists Bryan Talbot, Hunt Emerson and Steve Gibson, and wordsmiths including Mike Conroy, Gary Eliot, Will Morgan, Tim Pilcher and Steve Turner.



COMIX: THE UNDERGROUND REVOLUTION

FOREWORD: DENIS KITCHEN

Foreword

Sometimes cultural phenomena appear with relative spontaneity. A youth movement, political tumult, rapidly changing sexual politics and mores, open drug use and an incipient art form all converged in America in the late '60s.

Underground comix was the bastard child of a wayward generation.

As someone who was there near the very beginning I can say with certainty that there was no grand conspiracy, no secret cell activity and no intellectual summit. Even the beginning, if one must define the beginning, is murky. Robert Crumb's first **Zap**, appearing during San Francisco's fabled summer of love in 1967, is widely regarded, and rightly so, as the catalyst for the stream of work that followed.

But the medium's relatively short evolution includes earlier independent efforts by artists like Frank Stack, Joel Beck and Jack Jackson.

College humor magazines also played a key role. Several underground artists, such as Gilbert Shelton in Austin, Texas, cut their teeth on such titles. My own early efforts appeared in a college satire magazine called **Snide** [1967].

Regional underground newspapers bloomed seemingly overnight, both in major cities and college towns, providing vehicles and audiences for other young cartoonists. But the comicbook, the cheap newsprint pamphlet so reviled by our parents' generation, quickly evolved as the format of choice.

Harvey Kurtzman's role as the "father-in-law" of underground comix cannot be overemphasized. **MAD** – his brilliant early 1950s invention – mesmerized a generation with topics never before addressed in comics, and his dissection of famous cartoon characters was both howlingly funny and an eye-opening course in strip anatomy, galvanizing a new generation of cartoonists. **MAD**, as one commentator put it, was a sub-machine gun attack on American culture when unquestioning conformity was the rule of the land.

> "...a sub-machine gun attack on American culture."

In the late '50s two other Kurtzman satire publications, **Trump** (all too briefly) and the **Humbug** [1957-58], had the same essential crew of geniuses who could not help but inspire the Young Turks in the wings. Crumb has said that **Humbug**, quite simply, changed his life. As it did my own.

Kurtzman's finer foray into satire magazines was **Help!** [1960-65] which gave Crumb, Shelton, Beck, Jay Lynch and Skip Williamson their first national exposure. It was there that I first saw their cartoons, not long before their appearances in underground comix.

Some of these young contributors to **Help!**, along with Art Spiegelman and Jay Kinney corresponded and networked through miniscule circulation fanzines. Others worked in isolation.

My own first effort, **Mom's Homemade Comics** ("Straight from the Kitchen to You") was written and drawn in 1968 in a virtual vacuum

The artwork was lost before it could be printed, so R. Crumb's intended launch edition of Zap Comix was not the first issue to actually hit the streets.

Replacement work was produced for the February 1968 published Zap #1 (above) and when the missing originals were discovered they were published as the Zap Zap #0 (left). Currently in its 11th edition, it now carries a $2.75 cover price.

6

7

COMIX: THE UNDERGROUND REVOLUTION

INTRODUCTION: WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

INTRODUCTION

Putting the X into comix

Forebears and influences, roots and derivations... How the comix phenomenon came to be, owing as much to ***Surfer*** *and* ***Custom Rodder*** *as it did to* ***The East Village Other*** *and* ***The LA Free Press.***

UNDERGROUND comix. To an earlier generation, those two words represented an escape, an answer, an alternative. But most people today are more likely to lump them in with porn magazines just a pile of sexist titillation and rude drawings with a few words to hold it all together. Give somebody an underground comic to read and the chances are they'll skip through the visuals, looking for the naughty bits. The "nudge, wink, know what I mean, squire" *Monty Python* style curiosity inherent in everybody.

Sure, the graphic depiction of sex was one of the barriers that those rascally cartoonists smashed asunder, at a time when the glossies offered very softcore material by today's standards. But almost every new medium finds easy money from sex. Videos were totally backstreet dodgy goods when first industry started up. Before the high street video megastores legitimized the business. If you spotted anybody with a video case under their arm, it was a definite "nudge wink" contender. Telephone companies latched on to sexy chatlines as a major money spinner within months of privatization similar to the current domination of the Internet by porn merchants.

> "Comix – the X suggesting x-rated or an adult readership... special books."
> *...Jack (Jaxon) Jackson*

But the underground, in its lifestyle and its components was much more. The teenage college crowd was still a relatively new mass market in the 1960s, with independent spending power and eager to test itself by rebelling against tradition. It had been freed up by a new kind of music, by the creation of improved contraception through The Pill, and its heroes were no longer middle aged actors and singers. Even the country's leader was much younger and a renowned rebel against traditional values. When the beatnik and mod eras mutated into the hippie movement, and the new establishment became vilified through its politics and policing of such, equally new role models were needed. Rebels with a cause.

Through their instant accessibility by telling stories in pictures, comix became a perfect vehicle for a new way of thinking, a powerful tool not only to break the sex taboos, but also to present entire lifestyle manuals to the nascent peace and love generation. Not through the stagnating empire of Superman and Batman, but through street comix, introducing leaderless youth across the world to an almost-mythical alternative culture. In the same way punk rock shocked and revitalized the music industry ten years later, underground comix presented a heady alternative to the moribund mainstream, which was content to repeat a sanitized version of a formula which had peaked twenty years earlier.

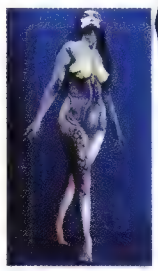
Love blooms on a street called Haight

While New York was traditionally the nexus of four-colour comicbooks, San Francisco is always considered to be the birthplace of the underground comix revolution, focused in an area known as Haight-Ashbury.

That term "Haight-Ashbury", probably bears some explanation for out of towners. Described by today's commentators as "the world's first psychedelic city-state" the Haight-Ashbury was little more than a few square blocks that stretched from the edge of Golden Gate Park for around a half mile down Haight Street.

On Haight Street there were sidewalk cafés, head shops such as the Psychedelic Shop selling drug-related paraphernalia, poster shops like the Pacific Ocean Trading Company and hip boutiques such as The Blushing Peony. Running parallel to Haight Street is the Panhandle, a very narrow slice of Golden Gate Park which was the site of many free concerts and protest rallies. Its counter-cultural ethos proved irresistible to the restless youth of the States. From across the world, they flocked to Haight-Ashbury with the district's population exploding from 15,000 in 1965 to almost 100,000 by the summer of 1967.

Naturally, this made the "Height" not only a nexus for the underground comix scene, with artists drawn together to create an



10

11

Love blooms on a street called Haight

Setting the scene for a detailed overview of a rarely chronicled but hugely influential form of art, the book follows Denis Kitchen's foreword with a 16-page trip back in time to 1967 and San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district, home of the Summer of Love and the birthplace of underground comix.

Packed with exclusive facts only recently unearthed, this is a must-read volume for seasoned stoners and the mildly curious alike.

Line 'em up... Bag 'em and Tag 'em!

Making the book unique, **Comix: The Underground Revolution** concludes with an epic checklist of all the major underground comix produced in the US and UK.

Fully annotated and brightly illustrated, not only does it list titles, publishers, issues produced and dates, but also details key contributors to each and every title, to help you track down those rare comix by your favourite artists.

COMIX: THE UNDERGROUND REVOLUTION

COMIX CHECKLIST

Comix checklist

During the past four decades, almost 1,000 underground comix have been produced, with many running to multiple editions. Following is the major output, listing all key artists involved.

274

275

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Comment is a forum to enable fans and professionals alike to express their personal points of view on aspects of the comics industry. As such, the following opinions do not necessarily reflect those of this publication, but space will be given in subsequent issues to well-reasoned opposing views. Submissions are edited only for grammar, clarity and brevity.

Collecting the best of British

Comment by Justin Kyriakides, Southgate, London N14

THERE were many factors which seriously damaged the comics collecting hobby in the Nineties. This has been discussed on many occasions, so I will not go too deeply into that.

There are also many factors, which fuelled the comics collecting craze in the Seventies and Eighties and I believe **2000 AD** has all of them. What I would like to write about is the fact that I believe **2000 AD** has the potential to take over from where Marvel and DC left off.

Many people enjoy collecting, but what they collect depends on what captures their interest first. It could be stamps, coins, art or, in our case, comics. One of the reasons people originally started collecting comics was because they wanted to make their sets or runs complete. For example if you bought **Spider-Man** #4, started reading from there and enjoyed it, you would probably make an effort to buy issues 1, 2 and 3. But since they are no longer in circulation, you would have to buy from another collector and pay a premium. You would then keep these safe and continue collecting the whole series.

This is true of most items that people collect, but comics are unique in that they have many other factors which influence their collectability. For example, first appearances of characters who later on become more popular increase a comic's value, thereby creating key issues. **Hulk** #181 introduced Wolverine and now sells for hundreds of pounds, **Amazing Spider-Man** #129 introduced The Punisher and is therefore much sought after. **X-Men Giant-Size** #1 and #94 introduced the new Uncanny X-Men and both these issues are priced at over £1000 for a 'near mint' copy.

This is also true of popular villains. I think **Iron Man** #54 introduced Thanos and **Fantastic Four** #48 introduced Galactus. And both comics are in demand and very expensive.

In addition to these influences, another factor has arisen. Once an artist becomes popular, his earlier work – from when he was less well known – increases in value, like for example the great Jack Kirby and Neal Adams.

The reason I am talking about American comics is because they started to introduce artificial means to increase a comic's collectability, such as multiple covers, crossovers and platinum covers, which as we all know, backfired. There is now a gap in the collector market which I believe **2000AD** can fill.

2000AD has all of the above factors, which instigated and fuelled the original comics collecting boom in the Seventies. Firstly, there has been a single run of **2000AD** since 1977, currently reaching Prog 1374. This would be a challenge for any collector to complete, and ultimately a very satisfying achievement.

Secondly, the run which has spanned over 26 years and four decades, (you can work that one out!) has introduced many popular characters, thereby creating a multitude of key issues in **2000AD**'s history.

For example, Prog #2 introduced Mega City 1's Judge Dredd. A copy of the issue sold last year through Comic Book Postal Auctions Limited, for £551. Prog #149 introduced Judge Death. Prog #228 Rogue Trooper and Prog #1035 Nikolai Dante. There are many others.

In addition, **2000 AD** has also launched the careers of many artists who have become massive worldwide. As a result, their first works have appeared in many different issues. Artists such as Brian Bolland, Carlos Ezquerra and, in recent years, Henry Flint. The issues where their art first appeared will one day be much sought after. Already Prog #41, which features Brian Bolland's first Dredd, fetches a premium.

Another factor **2000AD** has, which American comics don't, is the free gifts with certain issues. When free gifts are included, most are taken from the comic, used and then discarded. This means that the issues which are preserved with their free gifts intact, are then much harder to find. The comic is not complete without the free gift and cannot be considered near mint.

Apart from the obvious – Progs #1, 2 and 3, where the free gift can double the price – Prog #300 with

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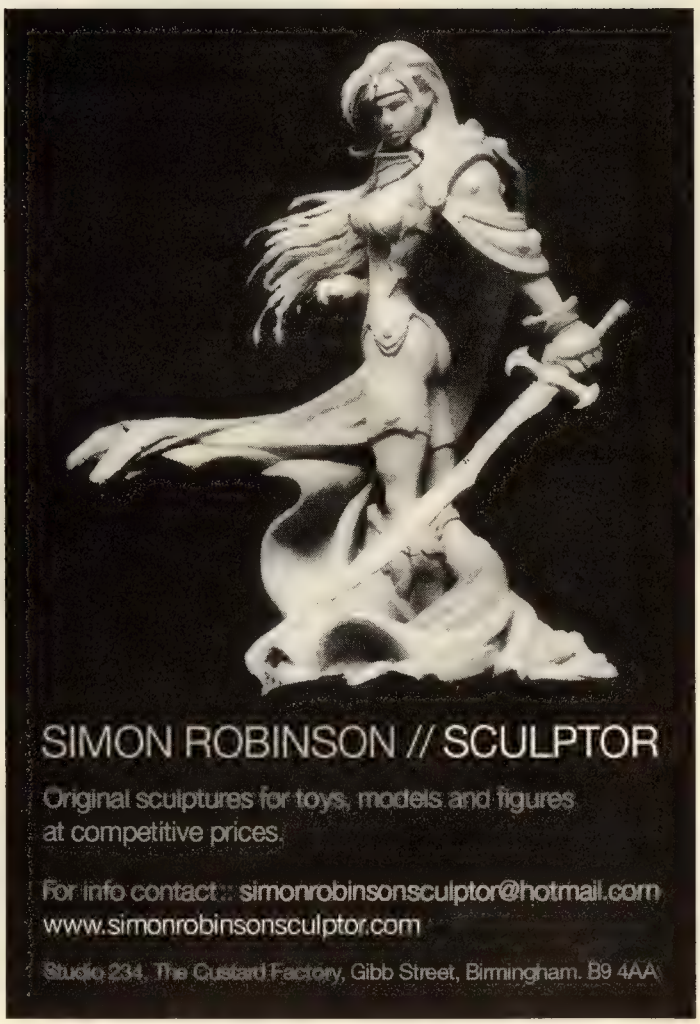
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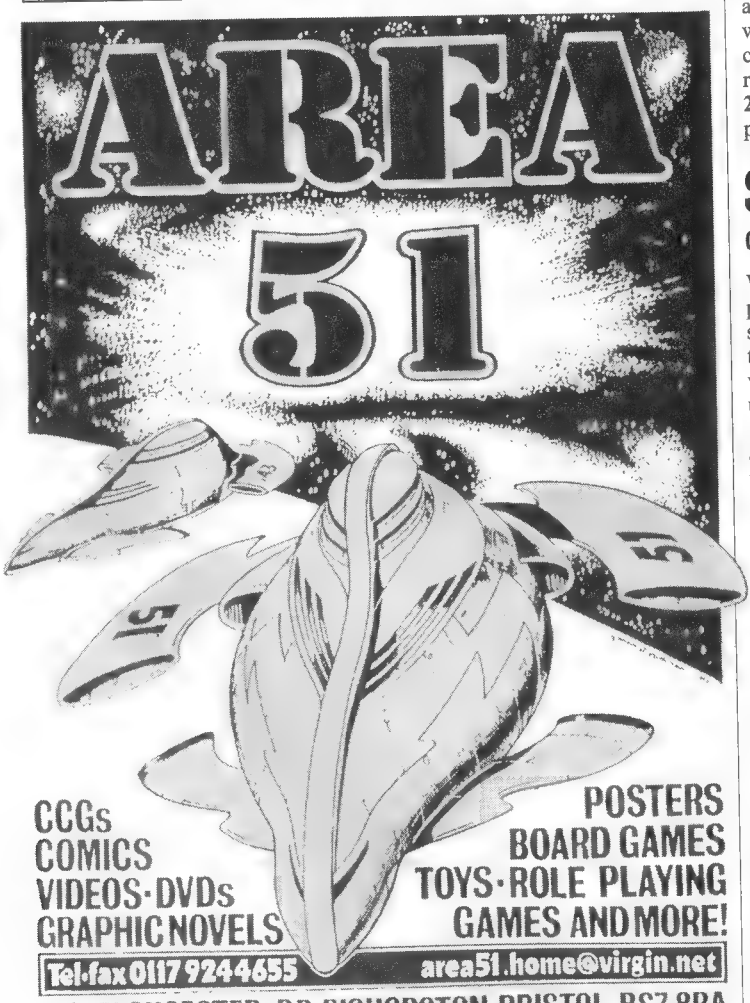


the Judge Dredd badge and Prog #780 with its wallet, are also very hard to find with their free gifts.

I believe **2000AD** is the new Marvel because it has all the factors needed to recreate what fuelled the original craze and, like Marvel, there is a whole universe of characters, which has been built up and established in British culture over the past 26 years.

My main reason for writing this piece is that I think Rebellion is not taking advantage of its stable of characters. It has been happy to let **2000AD** plod along over the past few years, creating and developing new characters within the main title and then cashing in on reprints.

It's interesting to note that Rebellion and previous owners of **2000AD** were always discovering and launching new talent but then allowed them to be poached by the big American companies. With a decent injection of cash and a massive sales drive, designed to launch, say, five of the most popular **2000AD** characters, with top artists and writers at the helm,

Rebellion could easily create a universe to rival Marvel or DC's, by publishing the most popular characters within its own titles. I know that this has been done before, but only with reprints. This time it should start with original stories and artists, in an American comicbook size and format.

I would love to see this happen, as I have been so disappointed by what has happened to American comics. I have now given up reading all my favourite titles. **2000AD** has been, the only publication which has kept me interested in comics, as I can actually follow a story from week to week, which is impossible to do with an American comic, due to crossovers and dreadful continuity.

The final point I would like to make is that, ironically, **2000AD**'s greatest strength is also its greatest weakness. Let me explain. **2000AD** is famous for creating new characters within the same title. They then have short runs and if they prove to be popular, they will make regular guest appearances. Judge Dredd is the thread that keeps the comic together and always appears.

This is all well and good but a lot of readers may become bored with a run of characters which they do not particularly like, and give up on reading the comic. They may then pick up the comic in the newsagents a year later to discover all their favourite characters have returned and continue reading. Or worse still, they may not bother to pick up the comic, as their interests have changed or they get a girlfriend(!) and never return to the comic.

Characters like Nikolai Dante, Rogue Trooper, Strontium Dog and many others deserve their own publications. And so do the readers. This would enable the fans to follow their favourite character, from month to month, within a title upon which they can rely. **2000AD** could then concentrate on launching new talent, characters and stories.

I hope you're listening Rebellion. I think it's a real shame that in 26 years **2000AD**'s true potential has never been realised. Perhaps they could do something now...

Small town press

Comment by Ben Spashett, Whitby, North Yorkshire

WHEN a company like DC takes a property to the small screen, we should applaud them for bringing the character to a new audience, which serves to expand, and ultimately strengthen, the product.

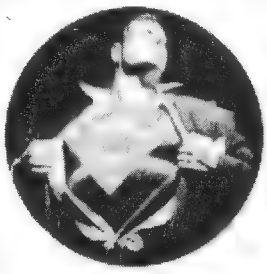
When they then bring the TV audience back to the printed material through a comicbook adaptation, surely it should seek to have the same effect? After picking up issue six of **Smallville**, the sister comic to the hit TV show of the same name, I'm not convinced. Has anyone else noticed how confusing and un-informative the title is? As a jump-on publication, DC isn't making uninitiated readers want to travel further into the world of capes and cowls

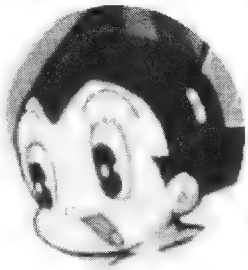
I must admit to being perplexed by John Van Fleet's cover "art" credit for two obvious photos used, or do backgrounds count now? The contents page presents a true conundrum. As it should, the page tells us where the features and stories are... but you try finding them. Sullivan's Travels; page 35? There are no page numbers until the episode guide on 46. Will this sort of oversight create reader interest if they have to rummage around for ten minutes in order to find a one page feature?

Also, apart from *DC in Demand* at the back (does anyone not familiar with GL know or care who Hal Jordan is?) the only comic ad is for Aquaman #15 on page... errm... Anyway, it's the "1st issue in a shocking new direction" apparently. But the reader opened the book to read about a young Superman,surely it's this spark of interest that should be cultivated.

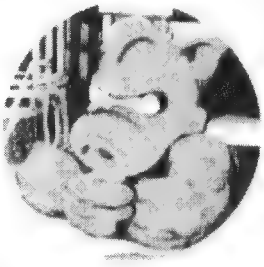
Why not show some previews of Ed McGuinness's superbly drawn Superman/Batman series, or a JLA cover featuring the Man of Steel? As a tie-in magazine, **Smallville** should be a gateway into the vast and colourful DCU.

The point is that while the industry is enjoying a higher profile than it has had in years, publishers should be working to suck in and hold onto the new readers. By releasing an easy reading product, with some well thought out adverts, who knows where the industry could go... page 35 maybe?





PUSH ALL THE RIGHT BUTTONS



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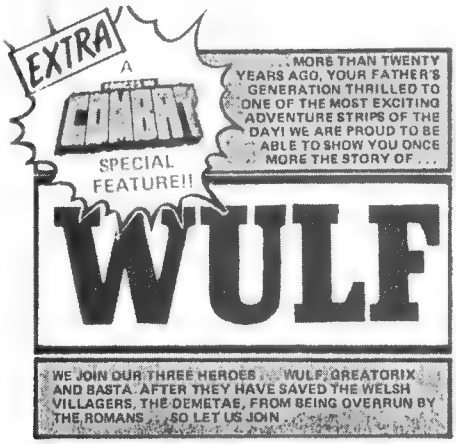
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A
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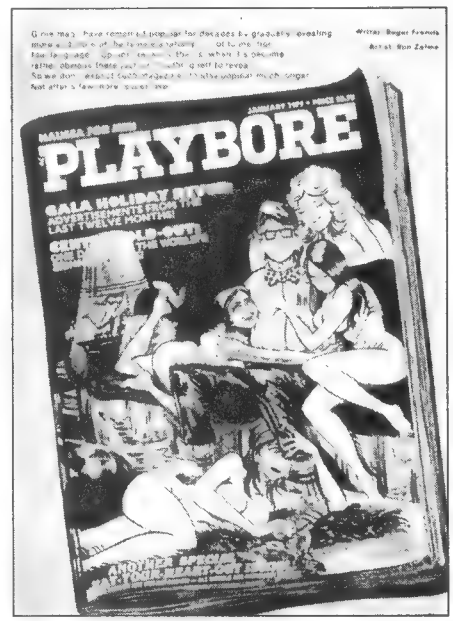
...MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS AGO, YOUR FATHER'S GENERATION THRILLED TO ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING ADVENTURE STRIPS OF THE DAY! WE ARE PROUD TO BE ABLE TO SHOW YOU ONCE MORE THE STORY OF...
WULF
WE JOIN OUR THREE HEROES... WULF, GREATORIX AND BASTA. AFTER THEY HAVE SAVED THE WELSH VILLAGERS, THE DEMETAE, FROM BEING OVERRUN BY THE ROMANS... SO LET US JOIN...

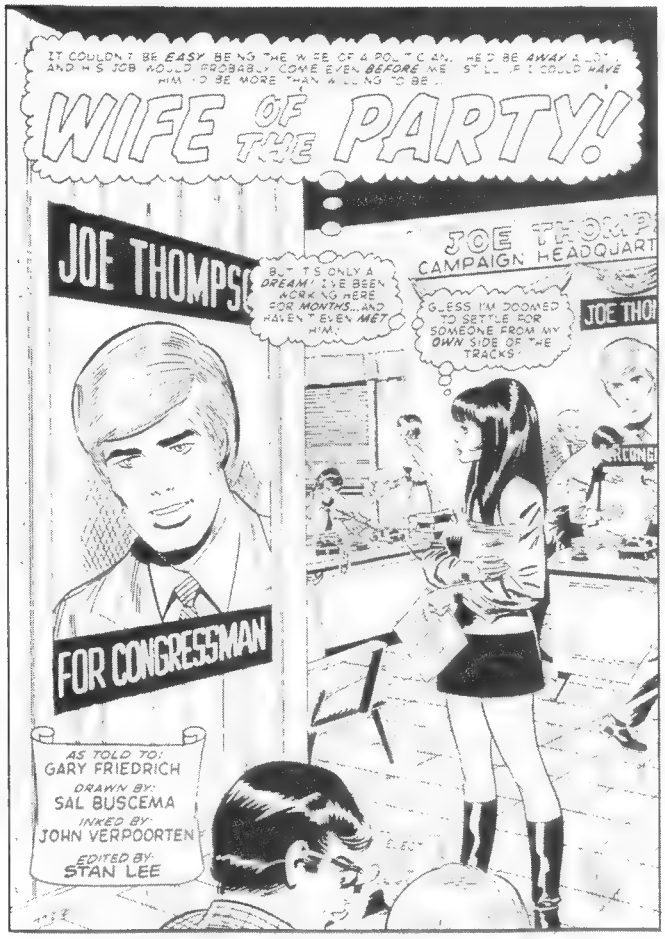
WULF THE BRITON
WULF LOOK, DOWN THERE!
HAVING SAVED THE DEMETAE FROM SLAVERY, WULF, GREATORIX AND BASTA SET OUT IN SEARCH OF MORE ADVENTURE—
BY R.S. EMBLETON



SAVAGE!
AND THERE'S A BOAT WAITING OFF THE HEADLAND!
COME ON—LET US GIVE THEM A TASTE OF IRON
SHOOTING THEIR BATTLE CRIES, THE THREE FRIENDS PLUNGE DOWN THE SLOPE!
BY THE GODS—IT'S WULF THE BRITON
WULF GET THE ONE END ON, BARDIC—HE'S THE LEADER!

THE SPIDER WAITS
A TENSE TALE OF FEAR!
S. PIDA
IT WAS A FEUD, THAT'S WHAT IT WAS! ALL MY LIFE I HAD HATED SPIDERS WITH A HORRIBLE LOATHING! I TRAMPLED, KILLED, DESTROYED THE CREATURES NEVER DREAMING, NEVER SUSPECTING THAT SOMEWHERE, MALEVOLENTLY, WITH DEVILISH PATIENCE
THE SPIDER WAITS!
I LIKED MY JOB AT THE FACTORY - BUT
THE CLOSETS! THEY'RE CRAWLING WITH SPIDERS!
Y-YES, MR O'TOOLE.
I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT. YOU'RE PRETTY THOROUGH AND EFFICIENT AT EVERYTHING ELSE! WHY FALL DOWN WHEN IT COMES TO GETTING RID OF THE SPIDERS?
I'M AFRAID OF SPIDERS

STAN LEE PRESENTS: TALES OF THE WATCHER!
SABOTAGE MISSION MARS!
AND IT'S ONLY THE FIRST STEP! AS SOON AS THE FLIGHT PROVES SUCCESSFUL, THEY'LL START SENDING UP WEATHER STATIONS ON THE MOON, AND NOW A DAY AHEAD WHEN TO EXPECT EVEN A DROP OF RAIN!
ENOUGH! SUMMON THE ARMY AT ONCE! WE MUST ACT IMMEDIATELY!!


WIFE OF THE PARTY!
JOE THOMPSON FOR CONGRESSMAN
BUT IT'S ONLY A DREAM! I'VE BEEN HERE FOR MONTHS, AND HAVEN'T EVEN MET HIM!
I GUESS I'M DOOMED TO SETTLE FOR SOMEONE FROM MY OWN SIDE OF THE TRACKS!
JOE THOMPSON CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS
AS TOLD TO: GARY FRIEDRICH
DRAWN BY: SAL BUSCEMA
INKED BY: JOHN VERPOORTEN
EDITED BY: STAN LEE

THE PRAYER
RETREAT? IT'S NO USE! THEY'RE GOT US OUTNUMBERED FIVE TO ONE!
RETREAT NOTHIN'! NOBODY CALLS BIG JIM JOHNSON YELLA! THEM'S THE CORRECT PROPORTIONS! FIVE REDS TO ONE! HERE I'M STAYIN'!
ARROGANCE IS OKAY IN ITS PLACE, BUT THIS IS FOOLHARDY! LET'S GO!
WAS IT A CLEVER STRATEGIC MILITARY MANOEUVRE? OR WAS IT A MIRACLE FROM HEAVEN?
SY BARRY
C•28
I ALWAYS SAY BETTER HONEST ARROGANCE THAN HYPOCRITICAL MODESTY!
AND THE CHAPLAIN ALWAYS SAYS "DO JUSTLY, LOVE MERCY, AND WALK HUMBLY WITH THY GOD!" LET'S GO!
BAM! BE REAL STILL! THOSE ARE REAL COMMIES OUT THERE! AND THEY'RE SHOOTING REAL BULLETS AND WE'RE REAL MARINES!
AND WE'RE IN REAL TROUBLE! LET'S GO!

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Comics Economics

Top 100 US comicbook sales for October 2003

Avengers/JLA up to #1

Rank	Prior	This Issue, Price & Estimated Orders	Publisher
1	(2)	**Avengers/JLA #2** $5.95 (162,297)	DC Comics
2	(12)	**Amazing Spider-Man #500** $3.50 (148,928)	Marvel
3	(=)	**Marvel 1602 #3** $3.50 (129,456)	Marvel
4	(=)	**Ultimate Six #2** $2.25 (119,909)	Marvel
5	(4)	**Ultimate Six #3** $2.25 (109,737)	Marvel
6	(5)	**Ultimate X-Men #36** $2.25 (108,112)	Marvel
7	(17)	**Batman #620** $2.25 (107,638)	DC Comics
8	(6)	**New X-Men #147** $2.25 (105,647)	Marvel
9	(8)	**Superman/Batman #3** $2.95 (103,569)	DC Comics
10	(8)	**New X-Men #148** $2.25 (103,010)	Marvel

Amazing Spider-Man at #2

11	(7)	**Ultimate Spider-Man #47** $2.25 (99,662)	Marvel
12	(11)	**Ultimate Spider-Man #48** $2.25 (98,747)	Marvel
13	(11)	**Uncanny X-Men #432** $2.25 (92,472)	Marvel
14	(13)	**Wolverine #6** $2.25 (82,074)	Marvel
15	(14)	**Supreme Power #3** $2.99 (77,123)	Marvel
16	(15)	**Spectacular Spider-Man #5** $2.25 (71,665)	Marvel
17	(1)	**Batman #619** $2.25 (71,386)	DC Comics
18	(N)	**Hulk: Gray #1** $3.50 (69,868)	Marvel
19	(17)	**Teen Titans #4** $2.50 (69,082)	DC Comics
20	(18)	**X-Treme X-Men #32** $2.99 (63,463)	Marvel
21	(18)	**Hulk: Gray #2** $3.50 (63,356)	Marvel
22	(N)	**Thanos #1** $2.99 (63,108)	Marvel
23	(17)	**Transformers: Generation One (v2) #6** $2.95 (62,947)	DreamWave
24	(20)	**X-Treme X-Men #33** $2.99 (62,731)	Marvel
25	(N)	**Transformers: War Within (v2) #1** $2.95 (62,548)	DreamWave
■ International direct market retail orders estimated below 60,000			
26	(22)	**JLA #88** $2.25 (59,448)	DC Comics
27	(16)	**Transformers/GI Joe #2** $2.95 (59,136)	DreamWave
28	(26)	**JLA #89** $2.25 (59,007)	DC Comics
29	(22)	**Avengers #70** $2.25 (58,878)	Marvel
30	(24)	**Daredevil #53** $2.99 (58,620)	Marvel
31	(32)	**Avengers #72** $2.25 (58,437)	Marvel
32	(29)	**Avengers #71** $2.25 (57,350)	Marvel
33	(19)	**GI Joe/Transformers #4** $2.95 (55,993)	Image
34	(25)	**Incredible Hulk #62** $2.25 (55,530)	Marvel
35	(N)	**NYX #1** $2.99 (54,755)	Marvel
36	(27)	**Fantastic Four #505** (#76) $2.25 (52,850)	Marvel
■ International direct market retail orders estimated below 50,000			
37	(32)	**Outsiders #5** $2.50 (48,900)	DC Comics
38	(19)	**Silver Surfer #2** $2.25 (47,275)	Marvel
39	(N)	**Spider-Man/Dr Octopus: Negative Exposure #1** $2.99 (45,100)	Marvel
40	(33)	**JSA #53** $2.50 (43,712)	DC Comics
41	(31)	**Venom #5** $2.25 (42,549)	Marvel
42	(37)	**Captain America #19** $2.99 (42,356)	Marvel
43	(48)	**Punisher #33** $2.99 (42,130)	Marvel
44	(41)	**Venom #6** $2.25 (42,065)	Marvel
45	(43)	**Formerly known as the Justice League #4** $2.50 (42,033)	DC Comics
46	(34)	**Emma Frost #4** $2.50 (41,710)	Marvel
47	(43)	**Punisher #34** $2.99 (41,441)	Marvel
48	(40)	**New Mutants #5** $2.50 (41,301)	Marvel
49	(39)	**Superman: Birthright #4** $2.95 (41,258)	DC Comics
50	(38)	**Exiles #35** $2.99 (40,730)	Marvel
51	(48)	**New Mutants #6** $2.50 (40,644)	Marvel
52	(50)	**Exiles #36** $2.99 (40,601)	Marvel
53	(44)	**Venom #7** $2.25 (40,580)	Marvel
■ International direct market retail orders estimated below 40,000			
54	(44)	**Mystique #7** $2.99 (39,697)	Marvel

55	(42)	**Green Arrow #31** $2.50 (39,525)	DC Comics
56	(46)	**Spawn #129** $2.50 (38,211)	Image
57	(47)	**Detective Comics #787** $2.75 (37,878)	DC Comics
58	(N)	**Superman/Batman: Secret Files 2003** $4.95 (37,856)	DC Comics
59	(N)	**Teen Titans/Outsiders: Secret Files 2003** $5.95 (37,759)	DC Comics
60	(28)	**GI Joe #22** $2.95 (36,662)	Image
61	(50)	**Thor: Vikings #4** $3.50 (35,682)	Marvel
62	(51)	**Flash #203** $2.25 (35,467)	DC Comics
63	(N)	**Hawkeye #1** $2.99 (35,282)	Marvel
64	(45)	**Planetary #17** $2.95 (34,939)	DC Comics
65	(N)	**Michael Turner Presents Aspen #1** $2.99 (34,659)	ASP
66	(60)	**Iron Man #73** $2.99 (34,132)	Marvel
67	(52)	**Superman #198** $2.25 (33,680)	DC Comics
68	(56)	**Thor #69** $2.99 (32,991)	Marvel
69	(54)	**JSA: All Stars #6** $2.50 (32,690)	DC Comics
70	(53)	**Green Lantern #170** $2.25 (32,679)	DC Comics
71	(47)	**Astro City Local Heroes #4** $2.95 (32,571)	DC Comics
72	(68)	**Thor #70** $2.99 (32,334)	Marvel
73	(64)	**X-Statix #13** $2.99 (32,184)	Marvel
74	(73)	**X-Statix #14** $2.99 (31,420)	Marvel
75	(58)	**Action Comics #808** $2.25 (30,978)	DC Comics
76	(57)	**Batman: Death & Maidens #3** $2.95 (30,645)	DC Comics
77	(63)	**Birds of Prey #60** $2.50 (30,515)	DC Comics
78	(45)	**Street Fighter #2** $2.95 (30,085)	Image
■ International direct market retail orders estimated below 30,000			
79	(59)	**Transformers: Armada #16** $2.95 (29,945)	DreamWave
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81	(66)	**Batman: Gotham Knights #46** $2.75 (29,213)	DC Comics
82	(72)	**Wonder Woman #197** $2.25 (28,944)	DC Comics
83	(N)	**Batman: City of Light #1** $2.95 (28,244)	DC Comics
84	(71)	**Alias #27** $2.99 (28,190)	Marvel
85	(70)	**Batgirl #45** $2.50 (28,029)	DC Comics
86	(64)	**Hawkman #20** $2.50 (28,007)	DC Comics
87	(94)	**Legion #25** $2.95 (27,954)	DC Comics
88	(67)	**Adventures of Superman #621** $2.25 (27,846)	DC Comics
89	(94)	**Weapon X #14** $2.99 (27,663)	Marvel
90	(N)	**Thundercats: Hammerhands Revenge #1** $2.95 (27,480)	DC Comics
91	(65)	**The Authority (v2) #6** $2.95 (27,415)	DC Comics
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93	(69)	**Thundercats: Dogs of War #5** $2.95 (27,297)	DC Comics
94	(73)	**Weapon X #13** $2.99 (26,974)	Marvel
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With thanks to Milton Griepp and ICv2.com

Alan R Cookson, 4 The Cloisters, Tarleton, Preston, Lancashire, PR4 6UL

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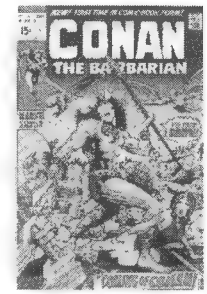
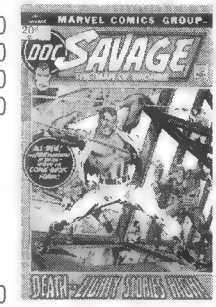
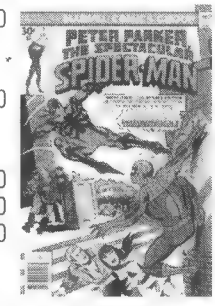






DON'T MISS OUT! Through two CI ads (Jan & Feb '03) I sold £14,000 worth of comics. To avoid disappointment, call now to get issues you need: 01772 814 514 (home), 01772 816 812 (work)

Networks

Comics news and gossip on the Internet

Compiled by Chris Rice and his team of Netmites

Rich Johnston's LYING IN THE GUTTER

The mild-mannered creator/writer of the Internet's original comics industry rumour and news column has outraged many a publisher and survived more than one change of website. But, despite several attempts to stop it, the Squiddy Award-winning gutterpress site continues to thrive, with over 20,000 hits a week at its new home of www.comicbookresources.com *From his unique vantage point, Rich often scoops the industry newshounds with his stories. Here are the highlights from this month's Gutter...*

Hands Up

Avatar has a new Joe R. Lansdale book on the block and it looks like Lansdale is joining the Avatar regulars. **By Bizarre Hands** is a six-issue monthly series, adapting Lansdale's short stories, and there are plenty more to come.

Avi, Axel And Hulk On Viagra

One of the repeated stories in last year's **LITG** was the rise of Avi Arad at Marvel. Head of their West Coast division, Arad has been a constant figure in Marvel's expansion into other media, such as film and TV, over the last two decades. And now, with the success of the Marvel feature films, he's been rewarded. His influence stretches over the entire company and most especially it has been felt in the publishing division.

Bill Jemas and Avi Arad were at loggerheads very early on, but Jemas had the support of the board. As the movies succeeded, that support switched and Jemas was left isolated and eventually squeezed out, demoted from publisher to his current marketing role.

And Arad's influence continues to be felt throughout the publishing line. After George Clooney declined to play Nick Fury after his people read the Garth Ennis/Darrick Robertson series **Fury**, Arad has been making sure none of his precious movie deals get scuppered by other actions on Marvel's part. And so the dead mutant return of Princess Diana was X-orcised from **X-Statix**. Certain other internally controversial series were "postponed". The creator-owned Epic line was abandoned due to Arad's stated desire, "We don't want another **Moonshadow**" (the title originally published by Epic over a decade ago, then more recently republished and collected by DC Vertigo).

Who knows what other decisions were reversed before they made it to **Previews**. Basically, aside from the Epic and Tsunami titles, pretty much every series or title from Marvel that's been cancelled or postponed over the last year has not been over sales, but content.

This includes the recent cancellation of Peter Bagge's **Incorrigible Hulk**. Over at the Comicon Pulse message-boards, Fantagraphics' Eric Reynolds confirmed that it was Marvel, not Bagge, who pulled out of the project, "I can tell you unequivocally that Marvel pulled the plug, not Bagge. Whether this is because they put the dip in dipshit or just because they're a bunch of pussies remains open to debate."

Another poster on the same thread indicated it was over content issues. When Marvel last published Peter Bagge, in the **Meglomaniacal Spider-Man**, Bagge's take was way out there. A revisionist Randian vision of Spider-Man playing off Stan Lee's business image and Steve Ditko's philosophical beliefs. It got CNN coverage, sold out, and was considered a critical success. But that was in Jemas's days, where Marvel were far more experimental in the way their franchise characters were portrayed, even when the first *Spider-Man* movie was on the screen. And in **Incorrigible Hulk**, he's a viagra-taking loon. Axel Alonso had to push hard to get the book on the schedule, even when Jemas was in charge. In a recent Newsarama interview Axel Alonso (editor of **Hulk**, **Spider-Man**, **Incorrigible Hulk** and **Meglomaniacal Spider-Man**) said "I don't get my panties in a bunch if the Hulk shows up in **Avengers** and fights She-Hulk. I

continued on next page...

Net sightings

End of an Era

Cerebus *is finally drawing to a close after 300 monthly issues, a record for independent comics that is unlikely to ever be beaten (although Terry Moore's* ***Strangers in Paradise*** *is working on it).* Silver Bullet Comics (silverbulletcomicbooks.com) *spoke to a range of creators to find out their views on Dave Sim's controversial magnum opus, and it's well worth having a look on the site for their opinions. However, the final words were given to Sim's long-time collaborator on* ***Cerebus****, Gerhard, who came onboard to provide the richly detailed backgrounds midway through the* Church & State *storyline.* Networks *thought those were by far the most revealing:* In my opinion Dave is/was the most sensitive person I know. His mood swings could give you whiplash. He used to take absolutely everything personally. He would read malice into every action that he saw as a slight against him. The [Toronto Maple] Leafs lost last night because he didn't get his page done. The Leafs [an ice hockey team] lost because they're the Leafs. In *Guys*, when Bear told Cerebus that Cerebus gets hurt, unhappy, mad and offended all at the same fucking time – that was Dave. "It bespeaks a self-absorption that verges on the pathological."

When somebody asked me what it was like working with Dave, I would half-jokingly respond, "What do you think it's like working with a manic-depressive, paranoid schizophrenic, hypochondriac, misogynist with delusions of grandeur and a messiah complex?" He seemed to hate himself and yet he thought that he was above all others.

On the other hand, Dave can be the most caring, compassionate, unselfish, equitable, honour and duty-bound, thoughtful, reasoned, humorous and generous person you could hope to meet.This side of him usually manifested itself to me in the little things he'd say and do.

Above: *A 1997 Cerebus convention sketch by Dave "I'm off down the job centre" Sim.*

Like the time he told me to take a pat on the back out of petty cash or the day that I had what I described as an escalating hangover, and without saying anything, he went out and brought me back a bowl of hot chicken soup.

He always makes sure that I get equal credit for my work on the book. He's always supportive when I think that that work stinks on ice. He made me a partner on the book and in business. He has let me know that he couldn't have (or at least wouldn't have wanted to have) done this thing without me. He is trying to get through life. He is trying to better himself. He is trying to do something meaningful. He is trying to see the Big Picture. He is trying to find what is true. He has always had a different way of looking at things. I hope he always will. At times it hasn't been easy for me, but that's life. It's a privilege being involved with **Cerebus** and Dave.

Whilst ***Cerebus*** *may have become a difficult book to read over the past few years, Sim produced some of the finest comics ever in the* High Society, Church & State, Jaka's Story *and* Melmoth *story arcs, and* Networks *would urge anyone to check out the phonebook-sized collections that will undoubtedly be filling a healthy chunk of your local comic shop's shelves.*

More Moore/ Moorcock

Renowned fantasy author Michael Moorcock is no stranger to comics – having brought his Eternal Champion *universe to DC for a brief stint a few years back – and it had recently been rumoured that he would be doing some work on Alan Moore's ABC line. Moorcock himself confirmed it on his own message board when asked by a poster:* I just got the green light on **Tom Strong and the Black Blade of the Barbary Coast**... Tom amongst the pirates... I think it will probably go over a couple of issues. *He added later:* I think I'll be working with Jerry Ordway.

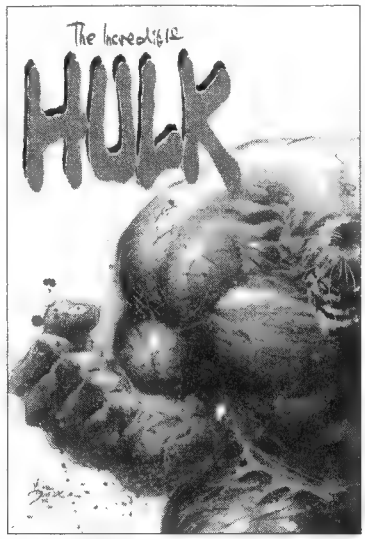
Multiple Hulks?

With the recent announcement that ***The Hulk*** *is to move to the Marvel Knights imprint, rumours have been flying around that Marvel are planning to launch a second Hulk book, set in the Marvel universe.*

To the delight of fanboys worldwide, the writer Peter David is said to be in line for this comic. He wrote the title for almost 10 years, with his run

considered one of the high-lights of the title's history, and in light of the recent success of Keith Giffen, Marc DeMatteis and Kevin Maguire's ***Formerly Known as The Justice League****, it seems that Marvel have recognised the appeal of creators returning to past glories.*

Markisan Naso at All The Rage *on the* Silver Bullet *site decided to mail David to see if he had any comment on the rumours. The writer replied:* It's flattering, because it says to me that people believe I still have exciting stories to tell about Bruce Banner and his alter ego. If I did take on such an endeavour, it would certainly be a challenge to live up to those expectations. To come up with something that would both satisfy the long-time fans of my work while simultaneously breaking new ground. The familiar and the unfamiliar, all at the same time. Now if it weren't true and I said it weren't true, that would put an end to all the lively rumor mongering, and what fun is that (especially since I've seen my name attached by fans to every-thing from **Wolverine** to a new **Spider-Man 2099** book)?



Above: *Mike Deodato Jr's cover to* ***The Incredible Hulk*** *#67. The series is currently written by Bruce (**Twisted Tales**) Jones.*

But if it were true, then I'm making an announcement in someplace other than, say, my website (*www.peterdavid.net*), and what fun is that?

Networks *certainly hopes that the rumours prove true. Although some of his recent work has been a little uneven, his reunion with Dale Keown for the recent* ***Hulk: The End*** *was fantastic and showed he still writes a mean Hulk story.*

Which leaves us all wondering just what Keown's doing at the moment. Is he still at the mixing desk?

Chris Bunting's COMICS WEBWORLD

Comic creators part one: Writers. Once only a fan's dream, contact with, and access to the personal musings of, the celebrities of the comic world is now a reality. This is thanks to the Internet, home to many official websites and the breaker of barriers between author and audience. So it's high time I covered a selection of writers' sites, with artists to follow next month.

BRIAN M. BENDIS ***www.jinxworld.com***
With **Ultimate Spider-Man**, **Powers**, **The Pulse**, and **Ultimate Fantastic Four** to his name, Bendis is one of comics' hottest properties. This site provides news, interviews and links, but while it looks funky enough, it really isn't full enough, leaving ample room to add more features to feed his ever-growing fanbase. **6**

ANDY DIGGLE ***www.andydiggle.com***
This former editor of **2000 AD** has now turned writer and is already under exclusive contract to DC Comics. This may be to do with the fact that he's clearly an up-and-coming talent with such titles as **The Losers**, **Swamp Thing** and **Judge Dredd vs Aliens** to his name. But is his site any good? Well, yes. The unique use of colour in the design really makes it stand out, and there's a decent selection of up-to-date offerings. **8**

NEIL GAIMAN ***www.neilgaiman.com***
Does this writer, one of comicdom's most enduring and popular contributors, really need an introduction? In case you've somehow missed him, Gaiman (pronounced "Gaym'n") is the pen-man of **Sandman**, **Miracleman**, **Black Orchid**, and **1602**. **American Gods** has turned him into a successful novelist too. With the sections *Where's Neil*, *FAQ*, *Exclusive Material* and *Journal* (in which the writer will often address questions), this is a fan-friendly site. **7**

DEVIN GRAYSON ***www.devingrayson.com***
She'd never read a single comic until her love for *Batman: The Animated Series* threw her into the world of superheroes, but Grayson has gone on to successfully script such titles as **Nightwing**, **Ghost Rider** and **Matador**. This site includes items of interest to both fans and aspiring creators, made all the more helpful by the fact it's easy to navigate and not maze-like. **7**

GRANT MORRISON ***www.grant-morrison.com***
With his waving goodbye to **New X-Men**, the void in this Scottish writer's output is due to be filled with **Seaguy** and **Vimanarama** for DC. Will these titles be any good? Likely, as Morrison was the first comicbook writer to make **Entertainment Weekly**'s Top 100 Creative People in America. Will they be controversial? Likely, as his stories have raised questions in the House of Commons. Will they improve his website? Unlikely, as it's a bit too bare and a bit too gaudy. **5**

CHRISTOPHER PRIEST ***http://phonogram.us/comix.htm***
Priest may well have been both the first African-American editor for a major US comics publisher, and the first published African-American writer in mainstream comics, but it is his talented scripting that we know him best for, including **Quantum & Woody**, **Deadpool**, **Black Panther** and **The Crew**. This high-tech site—with its neat 'morphing' technique—showcases Priest's amusing "online jabs", an innovative outtakes section, and best of all, for aspiring creators, the abrupt-but-helpful Style Guide. Classy. **8**

Honourable mentions:
PETER DAVID *[www.peterdavid.net]* and **KEVIN SMITH** *[www.viewaskew.com]*

Rich Johnston's LYING IN THE GUTTER

continued from previous page...

don't care. Neither does Bruce [Jones]. There's plenty of room for different visions, and ultimately, you can vote with your wallet on what you like or don't like."

The cancellation of **Incorrigible Hulk** tells a different story. Things have changed. The consensus, both inside and outside of the company is that a profitable Marvel has become more conservative. While they are still pursuing outreach programmes, they are on more traditional business lines. And the success of the movies has put the characters in a position where the belief is they can be "harmed" by an off-the-wall portrayal of them in a comicbook. Sales are up. The industry is booming. Things are good. Yet ironically, the moment where Marvel is in a financial position to take more risks, is the time when they choose not to. And only when they're bankrupt will you see projects like, well, at the risk of repeating Matt Brady, **Rawhide Kid**.

Marvel is producing some extraordinary superfiction comics. **Hulk**, **1602**, **Supreme Power**, **New X-Men**, **X-Statix** and more. But where are our gay cowboys, dead princesses, cold war dinosaurs, bizarre acts of violence and sexuality and philosophical cartoony tracts? Hmmm? Sales will often excuse all manner of sins. But I'm told that at Marvel right now, the belief is that anything selling under 80,000 copies is a waste of time.

Oh For The Wings

I understand that the recently shipped Hawkman figures have a common defect – many of them had snapped wings in transit. Cue mad speculator rush for undamaged wing-spans and Diamond running out of replacements sharpish.

A Patch Under The Sunglasses?

After repeatedly hearing a variety of rumours, Neil Gaiman has confirmed to me that yes, he is considering a Nick Fury miniseries for Marvel to follow **1602** at some point. He told me, "There have been lots of talks with Joe [Quesada] about things I might do for my Marvel Project #2, and one of the things talked about – because I enjoyed writing him so much – has been a Nick Fury project, which might do a number of things either with the **1602** Fury or with the Marvel one, or with both.

"But nothing's been decided yet. It will probably be several months before anything is decided, because I'm trying to get ahead on the novel I'm currently writing. So at this point it's amber."

However, repeated rumours that Nick Fury is to be portrayed as a "Gilgamesh," an "eternal champion" and that the current Nick Fury is the same character as the **1602** Nick Fury in a Michael Moorcock inspired sense of whimsy, Gaiman describes as "bollocks." Neil also adds, "I suppose I should also point out that it's quite likely that when I actually figure out what Project #2 is, Fury won't be in it at all; it's one of several things that's been discussed, that's all."

Sinema

I've been hearing talk that there's some interest in a *Sin City* movie from a number of people. Robert Rodriguez is one name that's been mentioned by a couple of sources. Look for more on that shortly, if it comes together.

Frank Miller has just finished a first-draft script of *Hard Boiled*, which is in development at Warner Bros with Nicholas Cage's production company (him again!) and development continues on [Miller's Spartan epic] *300* with producer Gianni Nunnari.

Show Me The Money

I hear that CrossGen is now paying creators, although mostly ones with an ongoing relationship with the troubled company – such as **Sojourn**'s writer Ian Edgington – after heated discussions. The company has also released $350,000 to pay previous artists and writers.

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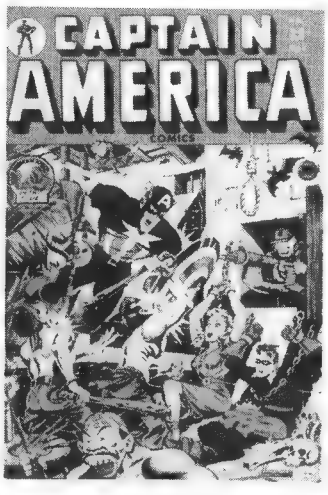

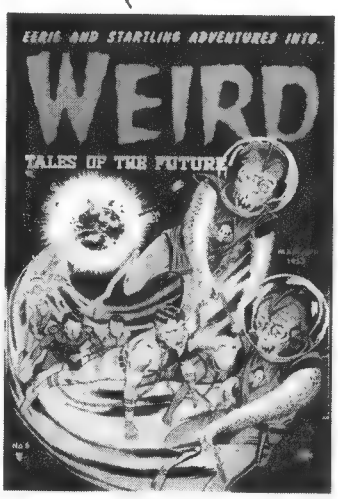

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Reviews

Because few retailers allow titles to be read before purchase, ***Comics International****'s comprehensive reviews section enables comics readers to keep abreast of the wide range of titles currently being published and draw readers' attention to comics they might otherwise ignore. Naturally, this section is of even greater benefit to readers who rely solely on mail order, as they can only judge the quality of a title after purchase.*

Review codes: *Individual titles are judged against all similar comics past and present on a* ***1*** *to* ***10*** *basis, while a comparison is made against previous issues of the same title, ranging from <---> to <+++>. Hence, a quality comic may score an 8 against all others, but have slid from a previous issue's 9, denoted by <->. No change is marked <=>. We do not compare* ***Bone*** *with* ***X-Men****, but review each within their genre.*

Review panel: *Marco Antony (MA), Sam Ashurst (SA), Chris E. Bunting (CEB), Jon Edwards (JE), Kelvin Green (KG), David Knight (DK), Scott Montgomery (SM), Keiron Mullens (KM), Ian Murphy (IM), Lee Nelson (LN), Rob Nott (RN), Matthew Robertson (MR), Terence Stewart (TS), Alex Thompson (MAT)*

CrossGen

Masters of the Universe: Rise of the Snake Men 2

by Staples & Tong; CrossGen/MVCreations

<=> Skeletor is about to finish off He-Man and the Masters once and for all... and then the Snake Men arrive, spelling doom for everybody. Despite the plethora of characters, writer Val Staples shows his skill by finding time to insert some fantastic 'little' moments along with some great twists and turns. The superb art of Andie Tong deserves equal credit, and also worthy of mention is Tony Grate's fun back-up strip. (CEB) 8

Sojourn 31

by Edginton & Land + Leisten + Ponsor

<-> It's away to the frozen fjords of the Trolls for our merry band of rebels with beautifully styled hair. Sojourn does well out of plundering ancient mythologies and cultures for background material, and this time around there's more than just the hint of the Beowulf/Grendel legend to serve as the backbone of the plot. But never mind that, just how do the heroes keep their hair looking so Hollywood styled? (RN) 7

Dark Horse

Fused: Think Like a Machine 1

by Niles & Medors

Mark Haggerty continues to contend with his crumbling marriage while being stuck inside a mechanical robot. Steve Niles concentrates on character above plot in this opening part before giving the luckless guy another problem to deal with. Josh Medors' visuals are all the more refreshing for eschewing the current manga-esque trend with some angular art. (LN) 7

Love Me Tenderloin

by Niles & Templesmith

Cal McDonald investigates monsters made of raw meat in this odd, offbeat tale. Ben Templesmith's deliberately under-constructed artwork gives for striking visuals that bleed atmosphere and crawl with tension; his inks and colours declare fogged-up scenes in a menacing, cinematic fashion – so it's a shame then that Steve Niles's pulp, sub-*X Files* plot fails to develop its initial concept and merits no more than a short back-up feature, not an expensive one-shot. (IM) 5

Syn 4

by Giffen & Titus + Washburn; Rocket Comics

<+> Syn fights her robotic self, but a new combatant changes the rules. The art is still a little unclear in places, but is starting to settle down and is much better for it. The writing too has improved, making this chilling and slightly sad issue the best yet. (KG) 7

DC Comics

Action Comics 811

by Abnett + Lanning & Kerschl

Due to a freak temporal storm, Metropolis must once again learn to cope with the awful reality of a World Without Superman. How do the rest of us ever manage? The trite plot paradoxically attempts to inject novelty into the long-running Superman titles by repeating the formula of a surrogate/doppelganger filling in for the Man of Steel. (DK) 6

Adventures of Superman 624

by Abnett + Lanning & Kerschl

With Superman spirited away, Mr. Majestic does an admirable job of protecting Metropolis, while John Henry Irons works on a technological fix for the raging time storm. Doctor Who fans may snigger with recognition at the mention of a 'charged vacuum emboitement'. For a nice touch that's a convention familiar to Superman readers, the cover perfectly complements that of the previous week's Action Comics #811. (DK) 7

Batman 623

by Azzarello + Risso

<=> Batman faces off against two new villains – Fatman and Little Boy, and discovers there's more to the Angel Lupo mystery than meets the eye. This issue is special in that it's the first appearance of Fatman and Little Boy, who, like Scarface and the Ventriloquist have an interesting dialogue style (they finish each other's sentences) and great character design. I have a feeling it's not the last we'll see of them. Azzarello was made for Batman, Risso was built for Gotham. I pity the team that has to follow this. (SA) 9

Batman Adventures 9

by Soria + Delsante & Haspiel

Inspired by the Dark Knight's animated TV/film escapades, this Batman title is aimed firmly at younger readers. *Deathtrap A Go-Go* sees a captured Caped Crusader reminiscing with Robin about the countless "certain death" situations he's faced in the past, and has won through every time. A wry, stagey tale well told. (SM) 7

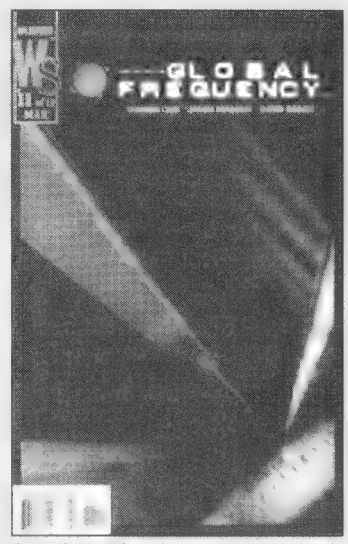
Batman Adventures 10

by Templeton + Slott & Burchett + Beatty

Slinky Selina Kyle is up to her old tricks. She's causing Cat-astrophe all around Gotham while still managing to flirt heavily with Batman. Catwoman maintains she's always Once Step Ahead of Batman, but is she really…? The feline one also turns up in the five-page back up strip. Great fun. (SM) 8

Global Frequency 11

by Ellis & Pearson + Baron



<=> Has a publishing gap of several months improved this series? Has it Hell. It's almost as if Warren Ellis feels compelled to apologise for the high quality of his Planetary scripts by banging out two-fisted, clichéd tosh in the shape of Global Frequency. There's a brainless action movie starring Keanu Reeves just waiting to be filmed from this. (RN) 4

<+> Never one to fail to live up to expectations, the latest issue of Ellis's *'Thunderbirds* for the Noughties' arrives a whole six months late. Fortunately it's a good one: as the rescue organisation comes under attack from more terrorists, Ellis finally expands on the origins of the characters, revealing how a punky university dropout became its systems controller. Jason Pearson's dynamic yet visceral artwork perfectly suits the cat-and-mouse chase scenario. (MAT) 7

Birds of Prey 63

by Simone & Benes + Richards + Lei

<-> Black Canary and Lady Shiva team-up, while Oracle realises a dangerous foe is hunting her down via computer. Gail Simone's samurai plot barely holds my interest, and while the fountain fight scene will attract readers for the wrong reasons, it's Oracle's difficulties that grip. Ed Benes' pencils feel less relaxed now, uncomfortably flat and lifeless to the eye. His work isn't bad, it's just not very appealling. (IM) 5

Caper 3

by Winick & Dalrymple

<=> Following the death of his lover, Jacob and bother Izzy manipulate local toughs against each other in order to make things right. The hard man duo's complicated yet loving relationship defines this gangster book, and Judd Winick's tight, efficient scripts are a highlight of his eminent career. Farel Dalrymple's backgrounds are occasionally underdeveloped, but his crumpled art develops a miserly atmosphere for these majestic, brutal tales. (IM) 7

Gotham Central 15

by Brubaker + Rucka & Lark + Gaudiano

<-> The Joker's sniper attacks are brought to a close, but not before more deaths. This briskly paced story ends anticlimactically and uncertainly but is energized by skilled writing while Gaudiano's inks stress all the right punches in Lark's battling, bruised pencils, which combine for a moody, smoky tone that makes this title visually as strong as its informed writing: not a book to be lightly dismissed. (IM) 7

Human Target 6

by Milligan & Chiang

<--> Christopher Chance impersonates a Catholic Priest for a tale that unfolds in predictable fashions, elevated only by Peter Milligan's writerly elan and Cliff Chiang's elusive artwork, which apes Javier Pulido's regular style. It is depicted as being unrealistically easy to pass as an experienced priest, and that Chance not having been ordained is an irrelevance (so why have a priest at all then?). Such doctrinal questions are swept aside, leaving this issue seeming under-researched and disrespectful – which would matter less if the ensuing plot was more original. (IM) 5

JLA 92

by O'Neil & Huat

<-> Tan Eng Huat's drawing looks more rushed than in the previous issue, and Denny O'Neil's story is full of idiocies. The quasi-religious fundamentalism of the alien wildlife ranger is an interesting development, but the JLA members mostly stand around dithering. (DK) 4

JSA 56

by Johns & Kramer + Champagne

Black Adam invades Kahndaq with a newly-recruited team and overthrows its leaders. There's something over-familiar and tired about such plots now, and Geoff Johns brings nothing fresh to it here. Don Kramer pencils vigorous fight scenes, which are hugely boosted by Keith

Champagne's strong, appropriately swarthy inks; but nonetheless it all feels too contrived to excite. (IM) 5

The Legion 29

by Abnett & Lanning + Batista

<-> So let me get this straight. As a result of the 31st Century Darkseid transporting his younger self into the future for a punch-up, all time is now unravelling, and everything that is, will now be gone. In, like, a matter of minutes. So why are Violet, Kid Quantum and Superboy standing around grinning like a bunch of loons? Is Batista not being given the correct art direction for the scripts, or does he not know how to draw anything else but shit-eating grins? This whole issue seriously lacks any element of tension, and I can't wait for the arc to be done. (TS) 4

The Losers 7

by Diggle & Martinbrough + Loughridge; Vertigo

<=> The mission completed, each member of the team goes off to do their own thing. Guest artist Shawn Martinbrough does a decent enough job, but isn't a patch on Jock, and Andy Diggle answers his critics by doing an excellent job of making this action-free issue both interesting and exciting. (KG) 9

<=> Artist and co-creator Jock takes a breather, as does the team of rogue US agents after their close encounter with the corrupt wing of the CIA. Fortunately this doesn't see a drop in high-octane action nor in quality artwork. Martinbrough steps aboard with his stylish Warren Pleece-like blocks of ink, while Diggle doesn't let up with comical one-liners, hard-nosed military types and the team's trigger-happy Afghani. R&R never seemed so exhausting. (MAT) 8

The Losers 8

by Diggle & Martinbrough + Loughridge; Vertigo

<=> Another great episode, as the individual storylines from last issue come to their diverse conclusions. There's excitement, humour and a little sadness here. Slap in a bit of political commentary and some great art, and this is a winner (pun not quite intended). (KG) 9

Plastic Man 2

by Baker

<=> The malleable hero is reluctantly assigned an FBI partner in an effort to find the slippery Eel O'Brien, leaving Woozy Winks rejected and Plas split at the prospect of his secret identity being revealed. Kyle Baker plays things for some rather obvious laughs, while his slapstick artwork looks as though it were lifted directly from Saturday morning cartoons. Great, if rather insubstantial fun. (MAT) 7

Rose & Thorn 2

by Simone & Melo + Green

<-> Convinced that Rose is cured, she is released into a flat with a sleazy landlord who brings out the Thorn-ier side of her. Gail Simone's script was strongest in the institutional setting, so this issue ends with the reader uncertain what direction the comic will take or what kind of story it is telling, which will hinder its appeal; but the two personalities feel well written, and Adriana Melo's pencils sketch some strong, disturbing images of Thorn, impeccably cultivated by colourist Dan Green. (IM) 6

My Faith in Frankie 1

by Carey & Liew + Hempel; Vertigo

A jealous god or a boyfriend back from the dead. Who would you choose?
My Faith in Frankie
#1
Mike Carey Sonny Liew Marc Hempel

Jeriven, a young deity, decides he'd rather live in the mortal world, and eventually comes to be the personal god of Frankie; but he is a jealous god, and determinedly sabotages budding relationships that she might love no other like him. Mike Carey's caustic wit directs events, making a sure-fire success and one of the most original and entertaining comics, and the best first issue I've read in the past year. Great fun. (IM) 9

Now I know this comic has 'chick-flick' written all over it, and the chances are that if you have a complete collection of testosterone-fuelled Preacher graphic novels on your book shelf you're probably not going to touch it with a barge pole, but Carey's comic tale of Frankie Moxon's overly protective guardian demi-God is actually quite amusing in places, especially the rabbit scene. (RN) 6

Sleeper 12

by Brubaker & Phillips; WildStorm

<=> The conclusion of season one sees some shocking revelations, with a twist to end all twists. Let's face it, anyone who has followed Sleeper since the start had an inkling that all this was going to happen eventually – but who knew it would be so satisfying? Sleeper is like a superhero 24, with twists piling on twists. Perfectly paced, lovingly drawn and expertly plotted – this as good as comics get. And you're not buying it. Fools. (SA) 9

Stormwatch: Team Achilles 19

by Wright & Smith + Nguyen; WildStorm

<=> Micah Ian Wright's political stance is once more thrust in your face in the final part of the Patriot arc, as he delves into the murky past of Citizen Soldier, revealing some dirty secrets of the US government. Santini's team finally tracks down the rebellious spirit of the US nation, only to have victory taken from its grasp by a lug of a 'superhero' and the handy effects of reincarnation. Although failing to have that much impact, at least these issues have highlighted the upcoming talent of C P Smith's clear-lined artwork. (MAT) 7

Superman 201

by Abnett + Lanning & Kerschl

Just to complete the picture, the cover for this third part of Strange New Visitor pays customary homage to that of Action Comics #1. Majestros does his best to save Metroplois, though his efforts are hampered by the good intentions of Superboy, Steel and Eradicator. Despite a formulaic plot, it's still a pleasant read. (DK) 7

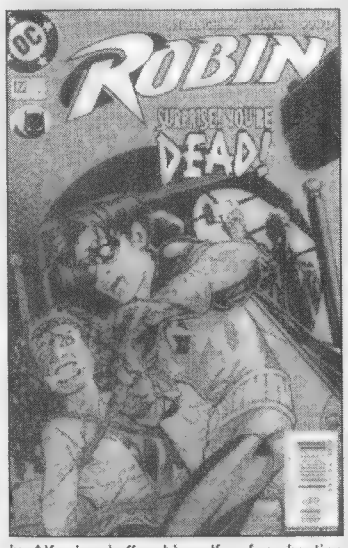
Superman: Secret Identity 1

by Busiek & Immonen

Here is a rare thing, a miniseries worthy of its stiff-spined prestige format. Clark Kent is unfortunate enough to be an ordinary teenage boy with the same name as the fictional comic book character, Superman, and his life is a never ending stream of jokes and taunts because of it until he mysteriously gains superpowers of his own. This is a subtle and realistic exploration of the themes of identity and conscience through the life of a confused and essentially lonely teenager. (RN) 7

Robin 122

by Willingham & Mays + Sowd



What a terrific cover by Jason Pearson – a dramatic, Chaykin-esque, cleverly composed bridge straight into the story. And it's a decent enough yarn. We have a gun-toting young psychopath in the Tommy Udo mould involved in a really violent confrontation with Robin. Batman turns up, and a supernatural Maguffin, and there are some new wheels for the Boy Wonder. It's all a bit wordy, in that self-conscious, Tarantino mode. All this glib chat and ultra-violence makes an odd combination, especially as rendered in this cute, manga-influenced style. It's attractive and engaging, but a little irritating, and I don't see it sustaining my interest for long. (MA) 6

<-> Robin is outmanoeuvred by new felon Johnny Warren, teased mercilessly by Alfred and offers himself up for a beating to the college jocks but still ends the day happy. Tim Drake's attitude and reserved humour make Robin into a watchable lead man, but Bill Willingham could do with upping the tension and threat level. Rick Mays' pencils work for clarity and feeling, rather than offer Hitch-like detail, but conjure up some very pleasing scenes. (IM) 6

Y: The Last Man 18

by Vaughan & Guerra + Marzan Jr; Vertigo

<-> Yorick is left with a colleague of Agent 355 while she and Dr Mann take Ampersand for treatment, but this issue feels like filler: very little of significance happens; what little plot there is being padded by Yorick's flashbacks and drawn out encounters. Pia Guerra's pencils are as open as ever, sometimes (but rarely) to the point of blandness, and supportively inked by Jose Marzan Jr but, while this has been a strong title, issues like this aren't likely to impress new readers. (IM) 5

Image

Brit: Cold Death

by Kirkman & Moore

Brought out of hiding by his overbearing seniors, super-hard nut and card-carrying pensioner Brit is called up to face off another menace. But first he must deal with a razor-fisted ex-wife and his new father-in-law. Robert Kirkman and partner in crime Tony Moore from the blasphemous comedy *Battle Pope* and gruesome horror *The Walking Dead* continue the story of their superhero with a difference. Moore's skilfully detailed art and Kirkman's comic one-liners bring fun to the widescreen genre. (MAT) 8

Desperate Times 0

by Eliopoulos

Chris Eliopoulos opens another chapter of his comedy bachelor strip from the back pages of Savage Dragon: this is apparently volume 3. The strip delivers economical gags in a defined style; and most importantly it's funny. Will Marty and Toad's friendship endure Marty's sudden and ill-advised marriage? Bonuses include words from the author and pages from his sketchbook. (DK) 7

Powers 36

by Bendis & Oeming

<=> The superpowered immortal Christian Walker and his allies face the combined might of a league of villains, but proceedings are halted by the arrival of Walker's lifelong foe. Finally revealing the secrets behind his hero-turned cop in the Forever arc has been a mixed bag for Brian Michael Bendis. Fortunately by moving from slightly clichéd fantasy and monkey sex to the de-powered hero he has once more brought some humanity to the series. This is in no small part aided by Mike Oeming's pared-down yet expressive artwork. (MAT) 8

Rex Mundi 7

by Nelson & J + Cox

<=> Julien starts to piece together the jigsaw of the recent murders, mysterious hidden temples and political machinations of the Parisian upper classes, leading him to the myths of the Knights Templar. Arvid

Nelson is performing a splendid job, creating an atmosphere of high-conspiracy for this well designed series and even involving the readership in the deciphering of codes. Eric J's fine linework and the evocative colours of Jeremy Cox continue to impress, and improve with each issue. (MAT) 8

The Walking Dead 4

by Kirkman & Moore

<=> Just why don't zombies attack each other? And what is it about humans that marks them out as free lunches? Writer Robert Kirkman gives his answer to that burning question as his heroes attempt to sneak past thousands of the walking dead without having to pen fire with the boom sticks. This is a great series and is swiftly shaping up to be one of my favourite horror comics of all time. (RN) 7

<=> After the knowing humour of *Brit* and other Image superhero books, it's perhaps surprising to find Kirkman's personal project to be so mature and bleak. That this project is about a zombie plague makes it all the more unexpected. Playing off the George Romero themes of social commentary and squabbling survivors, Kirkman does a fantastic job, highlighting him as a talent to watch. His collaborator Tony Moore is no less gifted, producing scrubby backgrounds, gruesome zombies and haggard surviving humans all within the confines of his moody, greytoned artwork. (MAT) 8

Wanted 2

by Miller
& Jones + Mounts; Top Cow

<+> Wesley Gibson starts to like his new life, a lot. Well, it's certainly risky to have a hero that kills and rapes, then kills again – especially when you consider that said hero happens to look a lot like Eminem, but somehow this just works. Kick-ass action, wish fulfilment of the lowest kind, and a character called 'shit-head,' what's not to like? By far the best thing in Millar World, and possibly ours too. (SA) 9

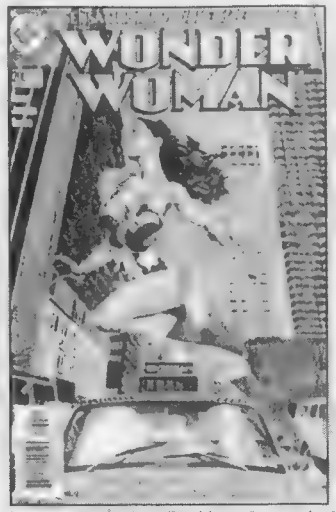
<=> Wesley Gibson embraces his heritage with open arms and transforms himself from new age loser to remorseless supervillain in a matter of months. Another quality script, which is what we've come to expect from Mark Millar, loaded with black humour and sharp dialogue. The Millar World imprint seems to be shaping up nicely. (RN) 7

Bonnie Tyler will be holding out for a long time waiting for a hero in Millar's Wanted, all the superheroes are dead and supervillains rule the planet. In this issue desperate loser Wesley Gibson finds the guts to step into his father's shoes and undertakes the unorthodox training that will turn him into world's greatest killer. All it took was the violent slaughter of twelve thousand eight hundred and seventeen farm animals. (MR) 8

Wildguard 5

by Nauck & Stucker

<+> Following their unscheduled field trials, the Wildguard contestants enjoy fan adulation under the media spotlight. Twelve heroes are shortlisted to take part in a team exercise to aid in the selection of the final five. The next issue will reveal the hero chosen by readers' votes to make the team. (DK) 7



Wonder Woman 200

by Rucka + Johnson & various

<=> Hey ho, so it's issue 200, and the old girl celebrates being 60-and-a-bit years old. But quite frankly, she hasn't got a great deal to celebrate at the moment. Greg Rucka is a fine writer, but he's not suited to superheroics (and no, Wonder Woman should not be an Ambassador) and seems to have a vague repulsion at the thought that she might actually have to hit someone, sometime, somewhere. Drew Johnson is particularly bad this time around, with stiff, unnatural figure work, fluffed fight scenes (what exactly was happening during the fight with Silver Swan, eh?), lousy layouts and a splash page of Paradise (floating) Island crashing into the sea that looks like nowt more than a kiddies toy being knocked over in the bath. It would be incongruous to describe this as the conclusion to Down To Earth. It's nothing of the sort. The Golden Age and Silver Age pastiches are generally fun, but aren't really anything more than filler, and Wonder Girl narrating the story of Medusa is a snore. There are some text pages made up to look like pages from a newspaper that purport to give some insight into that book that Diana's been writing, but I couldn't be arsed to read them. (TS) 5

Marvel

Amazing Spider-Man 503

by Straczynski
& Romita Jr + Hanna

<=> An ancient sorceress is accidentally freed, and Spidey teams up with Loki to stop her. Again, the "magic and mystery" angle J. Michael Straczynski imposes on Spidey doesn't really fit the character, but it seems churlish to complain about it when it's so well-written, clumsy exposition scene and clunky ending aside. (KG) 9

<=> A sinister force is unleashed during an inter-dimensional battle, raising the interest of the mischievous Loki who forces Spidey to work with him. Even though his lightweight dialogue is perfect for Parker, Straczynski plays things for laughs between this odd couple, somewhat destroying the gravitas of the Norse god in the process. Matt Milla's bright colouring palette brilliantly complements John Romita Jr's lithe artwork. (MAT) 7

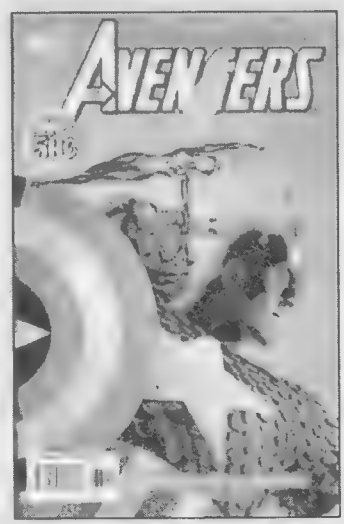
Avengers 76

by Johns & Sadowski + Currie

<=> As The Avengers decide to eject Jack-of-Hearts from the team, he sacrifices himself to save Ant-Man's daughter from a child-killer. The embarrassingly bad playing-card-related puns, and forced, cliched, sentimentality fail to make this a fitting tribute to the character, nor a halfway decent comic. Geoff Johns' usual weaknesses in characterisation, plotting and scripting again rear their ugly heads, thankfully for the last time. (KG) 1

Avengers 77

by Austen & Coipel + Lanning



<+> The team travels to Britain in pursuit of the Wrecking Crew. Chuck Austen debuts as writer, and while better than Geoff Johns, is still not exactly what you'd call a "good" writer. In fact, "competent" is probably stretching things a bit. Still, Olivier Coipel and Andy Lanning are back on art duties and at least make this mess look good. (KG) 2

Austen's Avengers run kicks off with a very odd conversation between Cap and Hawkeye about hitting women. Austen's grasp of these characters seems ephemeral – with the Wasp seen as indecisive in battle with The Wrecking Crew – but his bystanders are well-developed, reminding us that he can write. Coipel's pencils are patchy, and Lanning's inks struggle to find the subtleties in the pencils, but both are frustrated by the over-richly flavoured hues and clashing backgrounds of colourist Chris Sotomayor. All in all, this doesn't bode well. (IM) 4

<+> A surprisingly good start to Austen's stint at the helm and a breath of fresh air after Geoff Johns' mediocre run. A good solid superhero team book, some nice dialogue, and it's set in an England where not everyone talks like Dick Van Dyke. Surprisingly, Coipel's art is still not as good as it was on Legion, but pleasant enough. I'm enthused. (TS) 7

<=> Fandom braces itself for another Chuck Austen-penned series, but can collectively sigh in relief as this incentive issue is sound enough. There are some tell-tale Austen-isms: ham-fisted morality, annoying kids, and some dodgy dialogue from Hawkeye; but he satisfies traditional action fans with a scrap against the Wrecking Crew and cliffhanger ending. Coipel returns to the title, his artwork once again marred by fuzzy reproduction; but at least he can draw English towns. (MAT) 6

Captain America 22

by Morales & Bachalo + Townsend; Marvel Knights

<+> What connects New York's 'outrageous' modern artist Paige Rand to the barbed wire crucifixion of General Oliver? Chris Bachalo's work has struggled to impress me before, but here his dreamy colours wash smoothly over his own pencils on the New York scenes while dramatically enhancing the eerie night-time pages, topping and tailing the book with powerful colours that emphasise the edgy, unpredictability of Robert Morales' intriguing plot. (IM) 8

<=> Morales continues to impress, by mixing Steve's personal life – in the form of his new girlfriend – with the realism of post-9/11 politics. With Cap sent to a secret tribunal at Guantanamo Bay, he has managed to bring some life to the stalling title. Unfortunately even though Bachalo's art does look better under his own colouring and reunited with Tim Townsend's inking, his quirky designs are borderline ugly, with this issue's amiable – yet for some reason pin-headed – senator being a striking example. (MAT) 7

Captain Marvel 18

by David & Azaceta + Sotomayor

<=> Captain Marvel gets fired out of a cannon, a lesson in the inner-workings of reality, a resurrected mother, and a new costume, all in the space of an issue. But will any of this help cure his insanity? Thanks to the superb scripting of Peter David this receives the moniker of The Universe's Greatest Comic Magazine! (CEB) 9

Emma Frost 7

by Bollers
& Pagulayan + Crisostomo

<=> Emma's efforts to assert her independence find her in increasingly deeper waters. Bollers covers all the bases here: Frost's stroppiness, sarcasm and her unfortunate choice in men. Pagulayan's visuals are a lot cleaner here than in his Elektra work, although the bland colouring does him no favours. (LN) 5

Hulk: Gray 5

by Loeb & Sale
+ Hollingsworth; Marvel Knights

<+> Hulk attempts to make amends after his heavy-handed encounter with Betty, revealing the childlike side to the grey behemoth. Jeph Loeb manages to capture the characters' tempestuous relationship, although having Bruce and Sampson recollecting events in voice-over distracts from the story. But it is Tim Sale's artwork that once again marks this series out: his retro designs play homage to Kirby, while his wonderfully expressive lines and blocks of oppressive inks portray the full range of the raging giant's emotions. (MAT) 7

Human Torch 8

by Kesel & Dodd + Fridoles

<+> Johnny Storm learns the truth about the Locust Project. The sci-fi developments are just odd, but a big up on the poor

haunted house offerings of last issue. Joe Dodd's artwork is also markedly different to Skottie Young's usual hands, offering a firmer edge and an air more appropriate for the mysterious plot elements. Though overall the improvement is great, this still feels like a title that hasn't found its niche. (IM) 5

Incredible Hulk 66

by Jones & Braithwaite + Reinhold

<-> Bruce and Betty take stock of their respective relationships in light of recent events. A welcome change of pace from all the conspiracies and double dealing Jones has crammed the book with in his run, although he can't resist adding a few more twists to the tale. Doug Braithwaite's fine art gives each character a suitably miserable appearance. (LN) 5

Marvel 1602 #6

by Gaiman & Kubert + Isanove; Marvel Knights

<+> The crew of the Fantastick escape, and the secret of the Templars is revealed. This is the most balanced issue yet, as questions are answered, and there's a good amount of action. Andy Kubert and Richard Isanove make sure that this is also the best-looking issue so far, although this could do with a larger page count, as the cramped panels do not bring out the best in their work. (KG) 8

<++> Can Javier's 'witchbreed' X-Men free the Fantastic Four from Doom's castle? In an age when so many stories are padded out to trade paperback length, it's annoying to criticise Neil Gaiman for squeezing so much into so short a space; with cameos which can feel vapid, lacking space for development. Kubert is given more room to express himself this issue, markedly improving his artwork, which suffered when cramped into so many panels each page. Despite previously flagging, I sense 1602 moving to a strong finish. (IM) 7

<+> Gaiman in the guise of The Watcher attempts to explain events; it's the usual mumbo-jumbo of multiverses, temporal stresses and unstable simalternities, brought about by time travel. Fortunately things are finally moving apace, as Fury and Javier's Witchbreed make their assault on von Doom's castle, uncovering more heroes in 17th century costume. Kubert's art improves with this more dynamic turn, but after the previously leisurely rate it all feels rushed. (MAT) 6

New Mutants 7

by Defilippis + Weir & Barberi + Vlasco

<+++> Josh feels deeply alienated by hostile classmates, and takes desperate measures to win them over. Nunzio Defilippis and Christina Weir are crafting a gentle title that mostly defies the obvious sentimental expectations and makes for an entertaining, touching read. Carlo Barberi's new pencils are mostly sharply focused and earnest in expressive desire, forcing a big improvement on last issue. (IM) 8

New X-Men 152

by Morrison & Silvestri

<=> The future tale continues, with the new New X-Men gearing up for a battle for the Phoenix Egg. Like some kind of twisted Wizard of Oz, this is bizarre and beautiful. There are some lovely moments in this issue – not least when Cassandra Nova breaks the fourth wall to address the reader with a distinctly Dorothy-esque statement. Add Grant Morrison's manic inventiveness to Marc Silvestri's stunning artwork and you have a story that's going to be read long after they've gone. (SA) 9

<+> Apollyon (the futuristic Fantomex?) attacks Starlit City, stealing the Phoenix Egg which 'Beast' quickly hatches. Although I'm not enamoured by Morrison's dense alternate future storyline, Silvestri's art is first rate, his work full of vigour, passion and atmosphere and much improved on his '90s *Uncanny X-Men* run. The colours on Phoenix blaze, elsewhere adding a grimy layer for darker scenes; if only the script was strong enough to merit such striking work. (IM) 6

Daredevil 56

by Bendis & Maleev; Marvel Knights

Brian Michael Bendis continues his subversion of the superhero genre, Matt Murdock's unmasking of himself as Daredevil further consolidating the title as a spandex free zone. So Peter Parker, Luke Cage, Stephen Strange and Reed Richards stop by for a chat. So much so that you can barely see them beneath the acreage of word balloons. In the park they confront Matt, dappled by leafy shadows, magnificent, with the concentrated presence of a million reservoir dogs. How does Alex Maleev achieve this expressive urban super-realism? Ben Urich narrates, his tale-telling sputtering to a halt halfway through. (MA) 7

<-> Bendis writes Daredevil in charge of Hell's Kitchen, forcing criminals out to other areas – which makes New York's heroes unhappy to have it on their turf! There's a lot of dialogue here, leading to cluttered pages, emphasising that it's the usually wonderful Maleev's pencils that really hold this issue back: the splash pages are unconvincing, while his Peter Parker looks psychotic. After a six-issue break, this is okay, but I was expecting better. (IM) 6

<+> Bendis returns to the pages of Daredevil, walking across scattered rose petals from adoring fans as he does, and I'm faced with the burning question, is his run on this title ever going to stop being brilliant? I tried last night to think of another writer/artist run of this consistent quality and length in all the years I've been reading comics and I'm still staring at a blank list as I speak. Superhero comics shouldn't be this good. (RN) 9

Runaways 10

by Vaughan & Alphona + Yeung

<++> Topher's secret is exposed, leading to the inevitable brawl, which Adrian Alphona draws well, even though his style better suits the emotive scenes. Brian K Vaughan's scripting of Karolina opens up her character beyond its original cypher. He also shows unexpectedly strong characterisation elsewhere and continues to develop this title into an exciting, improving and delectably illustrated read. (IM) 8

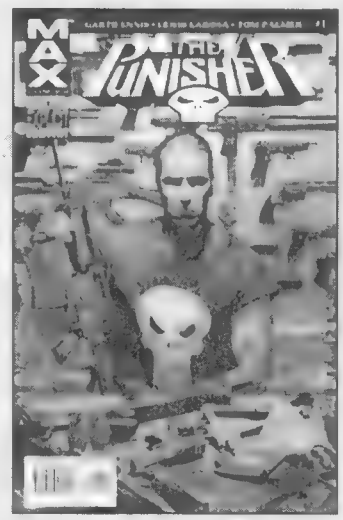
Sentinel 11

by McKeever & Vriens + Udon

<—> Agent Rinehart confronts Juston about the Sentinel, which has just recovered all its original programming and goes mutant-hunting. It feels like Sean McKeever's plot is racing towards completion in time for the title's cancellation, which is rewarding for persistent readers. All the same, it feels anticlimactic' and can't overcome the disappointment at seeing this promising title end next month. (IM) 5

Punisher 1

by Ennis & Larosa + Palmer; MAX Comics



It's the anniversary of the death of Frank Castle's family, so he decides to kill a mob-boss to 'celebrate.' Meanwhile, an old ally of Frank's has returned – to take the Punisher down. The new Max Punisher may still have Tim Bradstreet doing the covers, but inside it's a very different beast. For one thing, Lewis Larosa's art is darker than anything seen previously – and not just because of the ultra-violence depicted. Garth Ennis seems to have been reinvigorated by the freedom of an adult title, and this is the best Punisher script he's written for years - not least because it demands a knowledge of the character's history to understand the twist. Creepy, dark and wonderful. (SA) 9

Punisher 2

by Ennis & Larosa + Palmer; MAX Comics

<=> Frank continues his war on the Mafia, until an old friend catches up with him. There are just so many things to recommend about this title. The art is fantastic, the characters are more interesting than they've ever been, and as for the last page twist... This is the best thing Garth Ennis has done for a while, and that includes the fantastic Thor: Vikings. Even if you've never liked The Punisher, give this a try. You won't regret it. (SA) 9

Supreme Power 7

by Straczynski & Frank + Sibal; MAX Comics

<+> Hyperion begins to question the status quo, with disastrous results. I'm starting to run out of superlatives to describe this series - every issue just gets better and better. Imagine if you'd had the chance to buy Watchmen first time around, before it was collected, and you're nearly there with how great this book is. Do yourself a favour and start picking this one up now. (SA) 9

Ultimate Fantastic Four 2

by Bendis + Millar & Kubert + Miki

<=> The focus stays mainly on the relationships between the lead characters in this issue – saving the inevitable for the last few pages, which works well. Adam Kubert's experimentation is what makes this issue succeed for me, the strange angles he's choosing – whether it's a sideways fish-eye shot , a top down view of a room or a close up of Moleman's nosehair, Kubert's approach to this title is constantly surprising. Trust me, there isn't a comic out there that looks like this. Add to that Brian Michael Bendis's dialogue and, well, you already know this is a must have title. (SA) 8

<+> We've had a few good years of superhero comics lately and the Ultimates line of titles has done its share to make it that way. Here Mark Millar and Bendis continue to develop their reinterpretation of the Fantastic Four mythos with subtlety and restraint, mixing familiar concepts with sharp twists whenever they're needed. Neil Gaiman's 1602 series could learn a lot from these titles. (RN) 7

Want to know how great something is? Your spine shivers, you are hooked and desperate to know what happens next... Ultimate FF is the kind of comic that is doing exactly that to its readers. Issue two builds on the last with Reed Richards and Co still in their teens. This issue Reed's attempts to crack the n-zone have hit a wall until he is helped by (possibly?) a young Victor Von Doom. (MR) 8

<=> While Lee and Kirby dropped their readers directly into the heat of the action, Millar and Bendis go the slow-burning character-development route. We get introduced to the Richards-Doom relationship, 'Dr. *Mole*kevic' and Sue Storm, while the inter-dimensional transporters make their test-run; but no show of superpowers or giant invading monsters. It's a pity, as Kubert's expressive art makes these youthful versions likeable enough. (MAT) 7

Ultimate Six #6

by Bendis & Hairsine + Miki

Characterised by its lurching oscillations between protracted talking heads sequences and high-impact action set-pieces, Ultimate Six this month swings into frenetic action mode, with all the protagonists slugging it out on the White House lawn. Wordless fight scenes are stitched together by Brian Michael Bendis's immaculate

soundbites, and the battlefield is dramatically presented. After a ragged start, Trevor Hairsine has grown into this superior slugfest title and been equal to every challenge Bendis has set him. (MA) 7

Ultimate Spider-Man 53

by Bendis + Bagley

<++> Mary-Jane is missing, and only Peter Parker can find her. This is very much an issue of two halves, and luckily, both are fantastic. Brian Michael Bendis has always excelled at both the teen soap opera of Peter Parker's life, and the all-out action of Spider-Man's - and this issue is a perfect example. The opening half is moving, the second half exciting and laugh out loud funny at the same time. If only Bendis could sprinkle some of this magic onto Ultimate X-Men. (SA) 9

Uncanny X-Men 437

by Austen & Larroca + Miki

<++> Angel and Husk visit the Guthrie family home and find the family still at war with neighbours. Chuck Austen's writing style has earned him the wrath of numerous X-fans, but here he grounds the plot in continuity (without it feeling exclusive to new readers) and shows warmth for and insight into the characters in an arc that may surprise. Salvador Larroca's pretty pencils suffer under Danny Miki's brusque inking, which take much of the delicacy out of the work. Fortunately the Udon Studios colourists bring feeling and nuances to the page to re-balance the mood. (IM) 6

<+> Larroca makes a welcome return to the title; gone is his deformed cartoony art, replaced by a more expressive realism aided by Udon Studios' skilfully muted colours. Austen turns to small town conflict and star-crossed lovers, as a young member of the Guthrie clan causes a family feud to explode. Austen manages to handle this Shakespearean situation well, fortunately leaving out Claremont-style soliloquies. (MAT) 7

Weapon X #16

by Tieri & Johnson + Hillsman

<--> Ignore the Wolverine cover, he only gets one panel (on the final page!) inside. Instead, Chamber gets a tour of the Brent Jackson Weapon X programme. The plot is slow, too slow to accept how little we've been told about Chamber's physical transformation (his blasted chest and face now restored – a Mesmero illusion, perhaps?). Jeff Johnson's fill-in pencils – although cute in places, making Chamber look charmingly fresh-faced – are too boldly coloured by Tom Chu's Colour Dojo to impress. (IM) 4

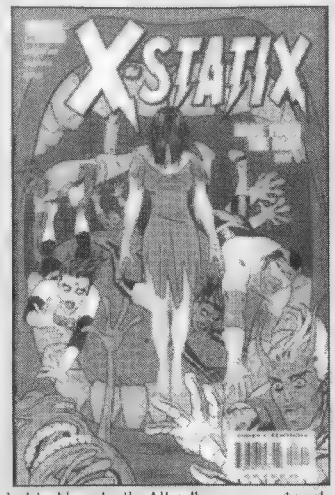
Weapon X #17

by Tieri & Jeanty + Hillsman

<+> This issue ignore the X-Men team cover, only Wolverine and Chamber feature inside. Wolverine tells Chamber to go ahead and assassinate John Sublime, in order to more convincingly infiltrate Weapon X. Is he serious, or just testing Chamber? Georges Jeanty's cinema scenes are tenderly shorn and passionately inked, which makes the contrast with the rest of the book – which is only adequately depicted – more baffling: Frank Tieri needs to quickly strengthen these plots if Weapon X is to have a future. (IM) 5

X-Statix 18

by Milligan & Allred + Bone



<=> Following last month's explosive ending, the team find themselves in a parody of The Ring as they are afflicted by a curse from beyond death. The sudden change of tone makes for an odd ending to the Diana/Henrietta storyline, but it's delivered with humour and skill, and Mike Allred proves surprisingly adept at drawing horror comics. (KG) 8

<+> This title is at its best when Peter Milligan cynically offs a member, so you may be glad to know that this issue sees three characters bite the dust. Milligan rips into Japanese horror flicks and posthumously released songs as the spirit of the annoyingly empathetic Pop Princess haunts the listeners of her new single, leaving the team to reveal the conspirator behind her death. Allred's groovy artwork remains invigorated with J Bone's sympathetic inking. (MAT) 8

X-Statix 17

by Milligan & Allred + Bone

<+> The team tracks down Mr Code while at the same time attempting to keep its dirty secrets from going public. There is so much going on in this comic, and it's all good. Social commentary, superhero action, comedic dialogue, it's all done with considerable panache both in terms of writing and art. And there's a classic cliffhanger ending too. (KG) 8

<--> Leaked documents reveal X-Statix members' scandalous illegal business dealings, so the team tracks down Mr Code to court popularity. Despite a few good jokes and a bad description of Mr Sensitive's new levitation powers, Peter Milligan's plot fails to move on fast enough and many of the gags feel reheated, and, sadly, much of it feels too realistic to be satirical. But an ordinary X-Statix issue is still one of the best comics in the shop. (IM) 6

X-Treme X-Men 38

by Claremont & various

<+> Storm faces Callisto in the arena, and finds herself hostage to its secret manager – an old, deranged enemy. Guido (Strong-Guy) and Yukio are vague and poorly defined, mere shadows of their previous appearances – disappointing given Chris Claremont's x-perience. Igor Kordey's linework is clumsily cluttered, not helped by disperate inkers, offering up only a handful of attractive panels. But can anything save this dull, artless plot? (IM) 4

X-Treme X-Men 39

by Claremont & various

<-> Storm plots to escape the arena, but will Callisto be at her side or against her? Chris Claremont's plotting here has been pitiful, while Igor Kordey's artwork continues to rankle: faces look blank, inexpressive; Storm's iris's and pupils appear and disappear. There's little here to get excited about, except that the current story arc is over. (IM) 3

US Indies

Assembly 1

by Jackson; Antarctic Press

A war-torn futuristic America, with giant robots, torturous school lessons, and city-levelling battles. A muddled start as writer-artist Sherard Jackson concentrates on action more than character. Expect this to clear up, as Jackson obviously has his eye on a much bigger picture, and has more than enough talent to save this title from the notorious "first issue blues". (CEB) 5

Black Hole 11

by Burns; Fantagraphics

<=> Another year, another visit into the troubled world of Charles Burns' teenage epidemic in '70s America. Evoking the disturbing atmosphere of sexual yearning and alienation amongst pot-addled youngsters, Burns' plays with the themes of rebellion, moral retribution and teen promiscuity. His distinctively rendered (mainly) black and white artwork skilfully captures the period and its repressed dark side. (MAT) 8

Boneyard – Volume 2

by Moore; NBM Publishing; $9.95

Michael Paris owns a cemetery that acts as home to him and a gang of eccentric monsters. With the dust settled from their defeat of Satan, an even bigger threat comes calling: the tax man. Full to the brim with humour, vile – but endearing and vividly imagined – characters, as well as pop culture references (an imaginary Spock calling Bones a "racist"), Boneyard is nothing short of being an absolute treat. (CEB) 8

Alan Moore's Writing for Comics

by Moore & Burrows; Avatar Press; $5.95

Despite his own protestations resulting from hindsight, the fact is that Alan Moore's outlined theories on comic writing are as sound today as they were when written, nearly twenty years ago. The proof is in the pudding: you only have to read 2000 AD's submission guidelines to see the influence of this work. Many "how to write" texts simply recycle the same old ideas: here Moore has found his own, unique approach. Full of insight and intuitive instruction. (CEB) 9

Chobits 1

by CLAMP; Tokyopop; $9.99

It's a testament to the talent of the all-female creative group known as CLAMP that they began life in doujinshi (fan comics) only to become one of the most imaginative – and best-selling – groups on the manga scene. This series sees them tackle science fiction, as schoolboy Hideki finds a very unusual humanoid computer. A great piece of escapism, due to its mature themes, fast pace, well fleshed-out characters and intriguing storyline. (CEB) 8

Demo 3: Bad Blood

by Wood & Cloonan; AiT/Planet Lar

<=> Another alienated teenager discovers there's more to her supposedly dull life following the funeral of her father and reunion with her rebellious half-brother for the latest issue of Brian Wood's teen drama series. Wood captures the angst and profanity strewn dialogue while setting up the *Twilight Zone* style twist-ending. Becky Cloonan's loose manga-inspired artwork is fine in an indie sense, but isn't quite as adventurous in styles as promised. (MAT) 7

Heaven Sent 1

by Dunn; Antarctic Press

The "Godfather" of Ameri-manga, Ben Dunn, starts this series in style, mixing real-world issues with the typical manga fare of angels and gifted teenagers. Despite the heavy-going premise of a boy losing his mother before being 'killed' himself, Dunn manages to keep this comic warm-hearted through witty dialogue and humour. A strong start. (CEB) 7

Junction 17 #4

by Hutchison; Antarctic Press

<=> Creator David Hutchison uses the high-production values of this comic to his full advantage, incorporating lots of action and stunning visuals into his sci-fi saga. The world of 'hyper reality' has become all too interactive, with gamers being killed for real. The heroes face down with the murderer this issue, but as some questions are left unanswered, maybe the threat isn't quite at an end... (CEB) 7

Kindergoth 1

by Kohse & Zugale; Bloodfire Studios

The premise is a kindergarten class made up of little goth kids. Despite a confident opening and Jeff Zugale's superb draughtsmanship, Lee Kohse's story doesn't quite pull it off. The humour is appropriately deadpan, and jokes are plentiful, but they're not really funny enough. The kids are unconvincingly mature, some are way too tall, and the fat German boy who constantly eats sausage seems lifted straight out of The Simpsons. (DK) 5

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Legends from Darkwood 1

by Reid & Kantz; Antarctic Press

In a fairytale land of wondrous creatures, Rose comes across a relentless unicorn-hunter, but on recounting this terrible ordeal to her father, discovers some truths she wished she hadn't. A terrific start from creators Christopher Reid and John Kantz, combining humour, intelligent structure and the shattering of reader expectations. Gruesomely good. (CEB) 7

Love and Rockets 9

by Gilbert, Jaime and Mario Hernandez; Fantagraphics Books

<=> The latest observant – and often disturbing – offerings from Gilbert, Jaime, and Mario Hernandez. This issue Maggie goes back home and runs into trouble of the paranormal kind, while Fritz goes to a high school reunion and lines up for trouble of an altogether different sort. Love and Rockets is proof that comics can successfully home more than just superhumans. (CEB) 7

Mortal Souls – Volume 1

by Grant & Xavier; Avatar; $9.95

After detective Eric Sharpe receives an unwanted 'gift' (the power to see the undead) his life rapidly turns upside down. The guardian angel that he acquires seems of little help, and allies soon turn out to be enemies. Competently written by Steven Grant, with appropriately gritty art by Phil Xavier, this is an edgy and absorbing comic book. (CEB) 7

Ninja High School 111

by Bair & Bevard; Antarctic Press

<=> An unexpected shift in story direction sees Yumei's brother, Tetsuo, arrive on the scene, bringing with him even more mayhem into this chaotic comic. A self-contained issue that fits neatly into the ongoing plot threads; this is top work from Katie Bair and Robby Bevard. (CEB) 8

Serenity Rose 2

by aaron a;
Slave Labour Graphics

<-> This odd little curio purports to be the journal of depressed goth witch Sera, describing lame rock band Waves of Revulsion's gig. This strange, chaotic world might feel perplexing, more so than in the first issue, because writer aaron a assumes readers know this world. The artwork, all cartoony gawps made twisted by black and white printing, is engaging even while the lack of colour disorientates; but Sera remains an intriguing character and the books refusal to take itself or its goth scenery too seriously is refreshing. (IM) 6

Strange Killings volume 1

by Ellis & Wolfer; Avatar; $9.95

When a prison succumbs to a riot, the British government sends in the SAS. When these soldiers encounter an even greater force – a supernatural one – the only option left is to deploy Sergeant Major William Gravel. The ever-skilful Warren Ellis builds in solid characters, pace and mood, while never bogging proceedings down with words, therefore allowing the art of Mike Wolfer to do the talking. A comic with a unique identity. (CEB) 7

Twilight X Storm 6

by Wight; Antarctic Press

<=> Action all the way as the Neo-Nazis attack the only thing in their way: Old America. During the calm and the storm, this is the most atmospheric manga you're ever likely to read, thanks to the elegant and epic art of Joseph Wight. A successful blend of Asian, European and filmic styles. (CEB) 7

Zodiac P.I. #1

by Ando; Tokyopop; $9.99

Another 170+ page bumper Tokyopop translation printed in authentic Japanese right-to-left format. This time round it's manga in the mystery genre, as schoolgirl Lili – aka private investigator Spica – takes on the task of solving crimes by using horoscopes, astrology, and a little bit of magic. Aimed primarily at the younger audience, whom it should please thanks to the energetic storytelling of its creator, Natsumi Ando. (CEB) 7

Canadian Indies

Thieves & Kings 43

by Oakley; I Box Publishing

<=> Young Heath Wingwhit comes to the aid of a young boy plagued by an evil stick figure, while the bumbling wizard Quinton attempts a daring raid on Princess Katara's encampment. Mark Oakley's whimsical fantasy continues to be inspirational; although his complex and far reaching plotting may be slightly off-putting, his mix of Monkey Punch-style artwork and passages of illustrated text has a fairytale charm that is irresistible. (MAT) 8

Transformers: Energon 19

by Furman & Guidi + To; DreamWave

<+++> Ten years on from Unicron's attack, Cybertron has changed, but not all are happy with the new order. Simon Furman writes these characters better than anyone else, and also gives us a story full of creeping tension. Meanwhile, the art team produces perhaps the best-looking issue yet. (KG) 7

Transformers: The War Within – The Dark Ages 4

by Furman & Wildman + Sander + Armstrong; DreamWave

<+> As the Autobots fight for their lives against Trypticon, Grimlock confronts Jetfire over his apparent treachery. Another solid issue with no real complaints beyond a slightly rushed feel to the plotting. Andrew Wildman's "less-is-more" approach to the pencilling does wonders again. (KG) 8

UK Indies

Armageddon Patrol 6: Life & Death Special

by Short & various;
Alchemy Texts, 20 Grants Avenue Bournemouth BH1 4NR

<+> John A. Short scripts four Maiden America tales. First up, Alex Paterson pencils a story of weapons training, before Viz's

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Simon Ecob takes over for the second offering featuring some tall tough-guy tales. Paul Moran handles the third, as the team discovers a lost soldier, and the fourth, a reprint of Maiden's first appearance – drawn by Craig John – sees her battle Octobriana. A strong indie outing. (CEB) 7

Short releases his latest special, following the feisty Maiden America and her band of superpowered freaks recruited to fight in 'Nam. Although allowing him to work with various artists, it's a pity that the multi-story format also allows little character development; leaving just half-a-dozen pages to tell quick jokes littered with swear words. The reprinting of the first Maiden strip shows that not much has changed in eight years. (MAT) 5

UK Newsstand

Action Man 104

by O'Malley & Griffiths + Tomlin; Panini Comics

<=> Action Man and Flynt investigate the X-Robots, only to discover an entire army of them. Making a hasty retreat, Flynt's trademark impulsiveness lands the heroes in even more trouble. A hearty script by Tom O'Malley is rendered dynamically by art team Martin Griffiths and Junior Tomlin. Including a poster, competition, and more, this is a lot of amusement for the younger comic reader and, of course, for fans of the Hasbro toy line. (CEB) 7

Commando 3686

by unknown; DC Thomson

<+> *Return to Action* focuses on a British WWI veteran soldier who survived a devastating encounter in occupied France, only for the exact same thing to happen again 20 years later, in the second World conflict. A reliably exciting yarn from Commando, plus a rare in-joke – the main characters are named after genre authors Paul Cornell and Martin Day. Written by a fan of theirs, perchance? (SM) 8

Judge Dredd The Megazine 215

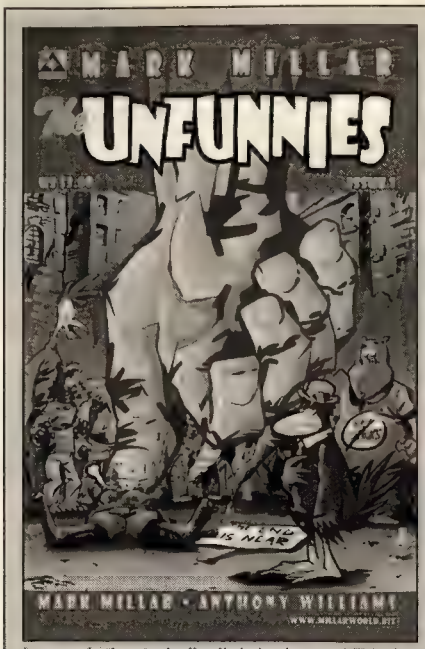
by various; Rebellion

<=> That the new multi-part stories have settled in so quickly is a mark of the quality achieved by the Megazine every month. Highlights include Charley's War, Anderson: Psi-Division, Whatever Happened to Maria? and Charley's War. Hitman is an unlikely choice for a reprint Dredd strip, but still enjoyable. David Bishop continues to review every Judge Dredd story printed in 2000 AD, and presumably will do for some years to come! (DK) 7

Judge Dredd vs Aliens: Incubus

by Wagner + Diggle & Flint; Rebellion; £13.99/$22.95

When some "killer beasts" turn up in Mega-City One for illegal pit fighting purposes, things look bad. When these beasts turn out to be Aliens deliberately bred for an even darker, deadlier motive, it falls on one man to resolve the matter: Dredd. A fitting – and furious – clash of two iconic pop culture clans, courtesy of the excellent writing of John Wagner and Andy Diggle, and the edgy art of Henry Flint. (CEB) 7



Mark Millar's The Unfunnies 1

by Millar & Williams; Avatar Press

This is sick cartoon fun with animals in the tradition of Fritz the Cat and the Air Pirates, but with the volume turned up to 11. Imagine Foghorn Leghorn outed as a predatory paedophile, leaving his wife to whore a sordid livelihood while he takes it up the bum in the state pen. These amusing cartoon animals play out a pantomime of depravity while real life seeps through from under the acetate cell. Rupert the Bear with his knob out seems like Looney Tunes compared to this spawn of Satan. (MA) 8

Having a child molester for a central character, this comic gives comedy treatment to a decidedly unfunny subject. There's dark humour in the atypically vile behaviour and filthy language of the cartoon protagonists, and Moe Crow sums up the horror of it all: 'when did the world get this bad?'. Despite revelling in shock tactics and taboo-breaking, The Unfunnies has a moral core: evildoers are punished. So far. (DK) 7

Perfect title. Taking almost-familiar cartoon characters into a depraved reality has potential, but Mark Millar's stream of mildly sordid, distasteful and unpleasant sequences lack the biting humour needed to make this work. Instead of being outrageous, this would merely be rather ordinary in most other media. This feels like a too-desperate attempt to shock (several 'scandalous' cover pictures, depicting cum-shots and anal rape, barely get hinted at inside) but lacks the satirical strength or darkness in its humour to be enjoyably amusing. Tremendously disappointing, this issue is best left on the racks. (IM) 3

Probably the most intentionally shocking mainstream comicbook you'll read all year. The Unfunnies is shocking not just for its taboo-breaking storyline that centres around child porn, prostitution through poverty and anal rape, but because of the juxtapositions of these themes in the context of a world of fluffy cartoon animals. The Unfunnies is a resounding success for Millar and is a natural progression from the irreverent tone and style of the underground comix of the '60s and '70s. (RN) 8

The Making of Judge Dredd: Dredd vs Death

by Boardman & Walsh; Rebellion; £19.99/$32.95

On first impression, this lavish looking book appears to be solely about the Dredd vs Death video game. It does however give significant coverage to the comic, including a flowing history and background of Dredd, and even contains a promo-comic reprint. The game shares the spotlight, with behind-the-scenes access, and complex details for the more technical-minded reader. Fans of the game – and likewise of Dredd – will love this. (CEB) 7

Mighty World of Marvel (volume 3) 13

by various; Panini UK/Marvel Collectors' Edition

MWOM has established itself as a mixed bag of archive material. The highlight is undoubtedly Frank Miller's original run on Daredevil, deserving of classic status. However, Herb Trimpe's Hulk has dated badly, though at least Sal Buscema's guest art overwhelms Trimpe's layouts. Between these extremes is Jim Steranko's first Captain America story, which is a joy to look at. In short, something for everyone (over 30). (KM) 7

2000 AD Progs 1371-1374

by various; Rebellion

<=> We're lucky enough to get three issues with Carl Critchlow drawing John Wagner's Dredd in the ruins of Cincinnati. The Red Seas pays homage to Ray Harryhausen via Sinbad and Jason and the Argonauts. The VCs, Slaine and Samantha Slade: Robo-Hunter complete a line-up of established series that includes one fairly recent hit and one re-boot. With no new stories to rock the boat, there's nothing to complain about here. (DK) 7

2000 AD Prog 1373

by Wagner, Abnett, Williams & various; Rebellion

A lavishly Clint Langley-drawn Slaine strip; a fun adventure romp in the Red Seas; some humour from Robo-Hunter; melodrama via The V.C.s; and, of course, some butt-kicking by Judge Dredd. An extremely enjoyable selection. My only question is where is the up-and-coming Brit talent that this comic's legendary for nurturing? (CEB) 7

Warhammer Monthly 77

by Alexander + Abnett & various; Black Library

<=> In the Anthony Williams-illustrated Titan, the stranded crew finds far more than they'd bargained for; even the Witch King himself seems concerned with the unrelenting Darkblade in a story by Dan Abnett and Kev Hopgood, while writer Stu Taylor adds some comic relief in Mundizuma's Revenge. All wrapped up in another striking colour cover. (CEB) 7

Small Press

Manhole 1

by Mardou;
£2.50 from Smallzone
10 Cleveland Avenue, High Ercall
Telford, Shropshire TF6 6AH

A slice-of-life 28-page anthology in the vein of Daniel Clowes' work. The reflective mother-daughter conversation *Esme's Door* is subtley touching. But it is the main strip, *George Best* – the life and loves of an unfulfilled young woman – that is the highlight here. While the artwork is not quite as cleanly executed as it could be, this is nevertheless a well-written, sophisticated title of inherent wit. (JE) 8

Paradise Lost 2: My Father's Son

by Bonney & Stanford + McColm;
£1.50 from Smallzone
10 Cleveland Avenue, High Ercall
Telford, Shropshire TF6 6AH

It may feel a tad dated, but writer Jay Bonney's ongoing superhero saga – recalling the late-1980s post-Watchmen era – focuses on the moral and political ramifications facing a Superman-styled hero. Although chapter two's artist Michael McColm lacks the finesse of traditional main illustrator Colin Stanford, the cracking script surprises, the story's resolution is unexpected, and at 64 pages this A5 book represents great value for money. (JE) 8

Pest Control 5

by Grant Springford;
Ominous Comics
£1 from G. Springford
2 Cawston Court, Highland Road
Bromley BR1 4AF

<+> Another excellent cover, and another excellent issue, as we are treated to the origin of Penny Dreadful. The writing is full of great ideas conveyed with considerable skill, and the art in this issue is undoubtedly Grant Springford's best yet. A serious rival to The O Men's dominance in the small press superhero field. (KG) 8

Watching Days Become Years

by LeVine;
£2.50 from Smallzone
10 Cleveland Avenue, High Ercall
Telford, Shropshire TF6 6AH

Begging comparison with Harvey Pekar's seminal American Splendor, this 40-page title acts as a diary chronicling five years in the life of US creator Jeff LeVine, capturing the perceived mundanity of an ordinary Joe settling into a dead-end job. LeVine's mostly minimalist artwork matures as the book progresses, encompassing a variety of assured styles from tight illustrations to abstract loose brush and wash tones. Stark, contemplative and understated, yet not without humour, the highlight is perhaps *No Second Acts* – a series of bold panels depicting wonderfully detailed scenes of the author's route from work to home. (JE) 9

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Panel Beaters

Comics International's monthly sampler of the best of the small press and indie comics scene

WHILE THE UK supply of post-adolescent comics has dwindled to a mere handful, by contrast the indie and small press market has mushroomed. In addition to **CI**'s classified announcements and small press reviews section, *Panel Beaters* gives readers a chance to sample some of the best of what's currently out there – in print and online.

Would-be contributors to this section for future issues should note the proportions (printed size: 188mm wide, 120mm deep for double bank; 60mm deep for single bank) before submitting black and white copies of their work. Submissions should be readable as standalone jokes or stories, as tasters for the comic.

You can email *comicsinternational@yahoo.com* for the Panel Beaters style sheet, or write to us at **Panel Beaters, Comics International, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ.**

Compiled by Leonie O'Moore, Andy Smith & Dez Skinn

A CHIPMUNK AND A LIZARD

by Jon and Howard

HELLO, THIS IS CUSTOMER SERVICE. MY NAME IS CHIPMUNK.. HOW MAY I HELP YOU?
YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW COLD IT IS OUTSIDE?
I WOULD SAY IT'S PRETTY CHILLY RIGHT HERE, BUT WHERE ARE YOU LOCATED, SIR?
I'M SORRY, SIR, YOU'RE RIGHT ..THERE'S NO NEED FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE TO COMPROMISE YOUR POSITION

Jon and Howard's **A CHIPMUNK AND A LIZARD** is updated every weekday.

Read it in full colour at **www.achipmunkandalizard.com**

DIESEL SWEETIE

written, drawn and bitmapped by R. Stevens

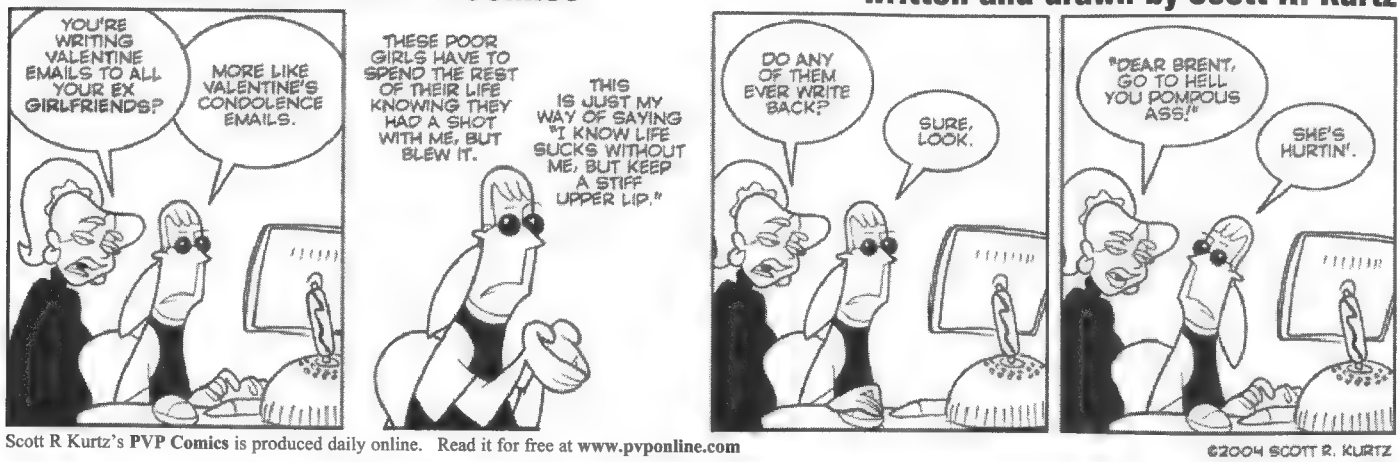
HELLO, STRAIGHT EDGE HELPLINE? I THINK I MIGHT BE...INTOXICATED!
NOPE, I DID NOT DRINK OR SMOKE ANYTHING.
I JUST GET ALL GOOFY AND LIGHT-HEADED FROM CELLPHONE RADIATION!
AND YOU'RE MAKING IT WORSE BY TALK-ING TO ME! HA HA!
XSUCKERSX

Richard Stevens, graphic designer and self-proclaimed caffeine addict, posts **Diesel Sweetie** online daily.

Read it for free at **www.dieselsweetie.com**

PLAYER VERSUS PLAYER: PVP COMICS

written and drawn by Scott R. Kurtz


YOU'RE WRITING VALENTINE EMAILS TO ALL YOUR EX GIRLFRIENDS?
MORE LIKE VALENTINE'S CONDOLENCE EMAILS.
THESE POOR GIRLS HAVE TO SPEND THE REST OF THEIR LIFE KNOWING THEY HAD A SHOT WITH ME, BUT BLEW IT.
THIS IS JUST MY WAY OF SAYING "I KNOW LIFE SUCKS WITHOUT ME, BUT KEEP A STIFF UPPER LIP."
DO ANY OF THEM EVER WRITE BACK?
SURE, LOOK.
"DEAR BRENT, GO TO HELL YOU POMPOUS ASS!"
SHE'S HURTIN'.

Scott R Kurtz's **PVP Comics** is produced daily online. Read it for free at **www.pvponline.com**

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SGT MIKE BATTLE: THE GREATEST AMERICAN HERO!

by Graham Pearce

SUMMER 1981 SGT. MIKE BATTLE AND SHAPELY CHARMS ARE AT A CIA-SPONSORED ARMS FAYRE IN THE MIDDLE EAST...
ISN'T IT WONDERFUL TO SEE COUNTRIES FRIENDLY TO AMERICA BUYING DEADLY WEAPONS TO DEFEND THEMSELVES FROM THEIR EVIL NEIGHBOURS AND INVADERS!
ER NO, IT'S SAD SEEING MEN TRYING TO REAFFIRM THEIR MASCULINITY BY HORDING MASSES OF EXPLOSIVE PHALLIC OBJECTS!
PHALLIC OBJECTS? I THINK YOU'VE BEEN READING FAR TOO MUCH OF THAT SUBVERSIVE FEMINIST NONSENSE SHAPELY!
I MEAN WHAT'S SO PHALLIC ABOUT THIS?

SGT MIKE BATTLE #2-4 currently available for £1 each inc p&p (cheques to Graham Pearce). Write to him at: 42 Talbot Road, Preston, Lancs PR1 9QX

LOST AND FOUND INVESTIGATIONS

written and drawn by Matt Milligan

Lost and Found Investigations has been published on the internet since January 3, 2000. Read the entire archive at **www.lostandfoundcomic.com**

www.goldenorbit.co.uk

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OPENS MIDDAY

Letters

CI, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (comicsinternational@yahoo.co.uk)

Humanoids correction

Patricia Jeres
DC Comics, New York

SORRY to have to report that an item in **Comics International** is causing some problems. As you can see from the complete press release I am sending, DC has the worldwide English-language rights to the Humanoids material, rather than the US rights cited on page five of issue #168.

I would appreciate it if you'd clarify the situation.

Consider it clarified, Paty. Good news for UK fans that copies will be winging their way over here.

Hannah's obsession

Tony Ingram
3 Lower Harlings, Shotley Gate
Ipswich, Suffolk IP9 1QE

I KNOW this is getting kind of repetitive, but I can't help noticing that only a month after it was finally amended (using copy I sent in, I note – which made my day!) the listing for **Essential X-Men** in *Advance Listings* has once again reverted to its former outdated text. Which leads me to the inescapable conclusion that Jim Hannah has a pathological obsession with "US editions **Giant Sized X-Men** #1 and **Uncanny X-Men** #358".

In a desperate bid for compassion for this poor demented soul, I must beg you to pay for a course of shock treatment for him. Or better yet, leave **Essential X-Men** out of the listing altogether in future. Such a move would eliminate this obviously unsolveable problem and put **Essential X-Men** or a more equal footing with stablemates **Mighty World of Marvel** and **Avengers United**, which weren't mentioned for months...

And, incidentally, how long has it been since **Commando** cost 80p?

Light but lively

Terence Stewart
49 Drayton Park, Islington,
London N7 7BH
(all stalkers welcome)

CI seems a bit light on features at the moment. *Movers & Shakers* is still missing in action, and there wasn't even a *Comment* this time around. Anything to do with that email problem you've been experiencing?

Still, it was nice to read the tributes to Don Lawrence (you know what I mean). I'm not that familiar with his work, but I do have that first **Storm** volume in English. Lovely, lush art, and some of the fantastic images have stayed with me ever since I picked it up in, erm, 1983?

Letters is getting a bit lively, thanks to dear Martin Gray. Trust that silly Saturnyne to get the hump though, just 'cause she/he/it was pulled up on rubbishing someone in public while hiding behind a pseudonym. It's just an affectation, dear (a bit like reading **The Sandman**) but you seem to have a supporter in Ian Murphy.

Ian, don't you feel a bit silly referring to someone as Saturnyne? Still, perhaps it's just my general boredom with talking to strangers called Beater69, dkjm23 ad nauseum on the Internet. A simple John or Sharon will suffice when you want to be rude, thank you. This anonymity lark is so last week.

I just hope Saturnyne removes all staples from its collection of **Secret Wars** (plus crossovers) before insertion. Ouch!

Sub-u-like

Martin Gray,
2FR, 1 Seaport Street,
Leith, Edinburgh EH6 6SJ

I'M NEVER one to get into a war of words, but here I am again. I'll understand if you don't print this, I know you'd hate the *Letters* to descend into a battleground...

Firstly, the letter from Saturnyne: well, I sit corrected. You have destroyed me, Saturnyne. Your calm, reasoned words put me to shame and I see no merit in trying to score points against such intelligence. I especially like the bit about sodomising non-Sandman freaks with rolled-up copies of **Secret Wars** (as if that's a bad thing). I was wrong to believe you were anything but a mature soul.

And Ian Murphy (who may be Saturnyne, ah, the joy of pseudonyms), I take your points, we must agree to differ. I can't see that I'm being too hard on old Saturnyne though; if she (?) can give it out you should probably assume she can take it.

While I have your attention, Ian, a word in yer shell-like. I've thought of writing to the **CI** reviews editor about this for months, but feared it would sound like nit-picking, but the nits are getting bigger and as you already seem to think I'm the many-breasted whore of Babylon...

Your reviews: I read 'em, I enjoy 'em, I usually agree with your thoughts. But would you please beware of trying too hard to impress with your vocabulary, as this can lead to a loss of meaning.

For example, Brian Michael Bendis provides a "cautiously robust script"; "sclerotic Mark Bagley's pencils provide sparks"; Mark McKenna's inks are "blockily inarticulate"; Igor Kordey's pencils are "occlusive". I can usually work out what you're getting at, but in communication simple is usually best – if a reader is struggling to understand a phrase, it's not working. Just relax and put away the random word generator – you're good without having to adopt the Beast's vocabulary.

Watch out, also, for tautology: Clayton Henry's art is "uneven and occasionally careless". And then there are things that just plain don't make sense: "Adrian Alphona's pencilling is (sometimes) sweetly laid back"; "plaintively drawn"; "peptobismal [sic] richness".

Also, don't run a pair of statements together via a 'while', 'although' or 'but' if one thing doesn't actually follow another, taking us into the land of the non sequitur. If you really wish to lay a couple of thoughts side by side, no-one would object to a handy 'and'.

Examples? "While Rick Mays' pencils are intriguing there's a subtly homoerotic charge to his work, but also some strong visual puns and ironies"; "warm but subtle humour"; "Although slow, this issue has a moody, cinematic feel". In each case you're setting up ideas as contradictory, when they're not.

Again, let me stress, Ian, I really don't want to discourage you from reviewing – your opinions are worth expressing; I just get the impression you're trying too hard to make, well, an impression.

Other **CI** comments: please, what IS the point of Stephen Holland's column? A whole page about what great profits he makes at Christmas? Zzzzzz. Just give more room to *Letters* or something.

More and more I'm missing *Movers & Shakers*, always the first read of an issue. I also missed *Comment* this time out.

The Don Lawrence tributes were appreciated. You're right, he deserved more attention. RIP.

I'm a bit bored with the publicity handout covers. I appreciate you've probably not got the budget for original art, but perhaps you could occasionally beg preliminary sketches from the likes of Brian Bolland and John Watson? Such would certainly give

Mike Kazybrid's COMIC CUTS

Script by Paul Kristian

HEY, MIC – THERE'S NO FREE GIFT IN THIS COMIC I BOUGHT!
DID I SAY THERE WAS?
THE STICKER ON THE BAG SAYS...
...'RODENT CHEW' ISN'T A FREE GIFT, NED – IT'S A DEFECT!!

Send your script ideas to the above address and you receive the original art if yours is published.

Please note: All scripts are submitted on the understanding they become the copyright property of Kazybrid, Skinn and Comics International.

CI a different look on the racks. Given that **CI** is, I assume, pretty much a non-impulse purchase for most readers, I expect you could experiment a tad.

The other columns are just fine: at the moment *Reviews* is my favourite (and the prolific Mr Murphy is a big part of that – I just can't stop being a sub editor, I suppose), with *Q&A* a close second worthy of more space.

Oh enough, I'm boring myself now. Keep up the generally super-doopah work.

Fake Baxendales

Lew Stringer via e-mail: lewstringer@gonuts4free.com

I SAW this page on eBay: http://cgi.ebay.co.uk/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem &item=2216642594&category=972#ebayphotohosting

It features an old *Nervs* original strip from **Smash** for sale, purported to be by Leo Baxendale. However, the art is definitely by Graham Allen, not Bax. I notified the seller, and they said they'd inform the winning bidder and give him a choice to buy it, but I see it's still listed as a Baxendale page. (Baxendale only did the very early *Nervs* strips, which he signed.)

If a John Buscema strip was listed as a Jack Kirby page fandom would go ballistic. But of course, this is just humour comics.

Not wishing to speak ill of the dead, one of the few to chronicle British humour comic art, Denis Gifford, often made this mistake in his books on comics. Once printed, others assume it must be right.

In Denis's defence though, when entire rafts of artists were told their art would only be accepted if they copied the most popular style (Leo's), it's tough to spot some of the imitators. On the other hand, I know a few who used to be furious when Denis got it wrong in print, but it's the price they pay for being commercial.

Review scores

Martin Eden via e-mail: martin.eden@titanemail.com

THE O MEN creator here! **CI** reviewer Kelvin Green got in touch with me recently to congratulate me on something very exciting – he said he was going to give **O Men** #21 a '10 out of 10' in **CI**! Hooray! But then the issue came out, and the '10' score had turned into a '9' – which is still cool but, well, y'know, not quite as cool.

A couple of weeks later, Kelvin sends me another email to say 'Oops, I've gone and given you another 10' for #22 – but it's somehow reverted to another '9' in the latest **CI**.

What's going on?! I'm guessing that you have a strict policy on giving out 10s. I work for a company that publishes a well-known sci-fi magazine, and I know for a fact that 10s are a thorny issue in the reviews section.

Something only ever gets a 10 if it really is the Best Thing in the World Ever (such as the first and second *Lord of the Rings* films). If a reviewer gives something a '10', the editor often discusses it with him/her and they come to an agreement. In this case, however, Kelvin seemed unaware of the change. The review of **O Men** 22 even says: 'absolutely brilliant, and fully deserving of the top score' – so where's the top score?

In terms of **O Men** coverage, **CI**'s been extremely good to me over the past five years and I'll be eternally grateful – you even gave me a free ad once, which was an absolutely amazing thing to do.

But a '10' would have helped create publicity that money simply cannot buy – which is invaluable to a poor small presser like me. Could you possibly let me know why the score was changed, please?

Everybody has their bias. If a reviewer hates a new writer's story on their favourite comic some have been known to give it a zero. But not in print. Conversely, a reviewer may give a title a '10' because of a great new story twist on a favourite title. But that's not what a '10' is about either. It's often called a perfect ten for obvious reasons.

Absolute world-class art, the equal of legends like Hogarth, Raymond and Foster through to Kubert, Ware or Hampson would score a '5' – at their peak.

A top-notch episode of a brilliant plot, scripted to perfection also scores a '5'. Hence the two marry together to make a '10' (provided they're not let down by poor colouring, lettering, or even editing or printing). A '10' is perfection, tough to equal, nigh on impossible to beat. That one of our panel thought the latest two issues of ***The O Men*** *were absolute perfection is a great compliment to you, sure, but top-notch script, art and lettering, Martin? Is this your never-to-be-bettered peak? So what are you going to do now it's all downhill?*

We're as harsh on low scores when not justified by the accompanying words. Many times we've amended results when the script is torn to shreds but the art – often by a fine illustrator – is ignored in the rant. The world's worst script but competent art is still a '2'. Equally, the world's best script with competent art is a '7'. That you scored a '9' is high praise indeed, Martin.

Marvels hikes

Bill Collins Willenhall, West Midlands

WITH the 'anything goes' policy on the mainstream Marvel titles (see **Avengers** #71) what exactly is the point of transfering **The Incredible Hulk** and other titles to the *Marvel Knights* imprint?

...Other than an excuse to raise the prices from $2.25 to $2.99?

The Lawrence legacy

Richard Thomas via e-mail: richard@richtee.com

I GOT the latest issue of **Comics International** today and retired to the bog for a quick read (the only place for true peace and quiet in my house!).

When I read the news of Don Lawrence's death, I stared at the words for some time and for the rest of the evening felt as though a piece of my childhood had disappeared.

When I moved to Pevensey Bay (which is about six miles from Jevington) as a six-year old I discovered in the loft a huge pile of **Look & Learn** magazines. I was captivated by the images I saw of *The Trigan Empire*. I would regularly scan those two fantastically colourful pages and only now do I realise that it was Don's strip that really cemented my interest in comics and art.

Many years later I was teaching at Eastbourne College of Art and Design when I was asked if I would be interested in demonstrating how to use Photoshop to colour black and white artwork.

One week later I was sitting at the side of Don Lawrence showing the master how to use a Mac to colour in a page of his artwork. Star struck? You bet.

He was hugely interested in what you could achieve. After an hour he left and the next day I received a bottle of whiskey and a note thanking me for the demonstration, and a reflection from Don that maybe he was just too old and set in his ways to contemplate learning how to use all that new technology. He was probably right.

The saddest thing for me is that there was no epitaph in the local Jevington press. Nothing. Don Lawrence may have never received the recognition in this country that he truly deserved but for me he was one of the all time greats. Sleep well, Don.

Looked and Learned

Rob Nott via e-mail: jconstantine@clara.co.uk

I WAS saddened to hear of the recent death of Don Lawrence. His *Trigan Empire* serial was a staple diet of many schoolboys (including my good self) in the 1970s, back when flared jeans and copies of ELP's album *Brain Salad Surgery* were the de rigeur status symbols for the Sixth form common room.

This was of course because schools viewed the **Look and Learn** magazine as an educational tool and ordered in copies to their libraries every week. Little did the teachers know that no one ever read the informative articles explaining how combustion engines worked or how insects could fly, but instead we all turned straight away to the two-page *Trigan Empire* strip to supplement our diet of US comics.

At a time when much of the Marvel and DC art was uniformly bland in its composition and detail, the glowing painted pages produced by Don Lawrence seemed to be the Holy Grail of comicbook art. Man, it was even better than a triple gatefold Roger Dean album cover...

On a more pleasant note, may I be the first to loudly applaud DC's decision to plunder the rich archive of European graphic novels and assorted comic albums. France and Belgium in particular have an astounding legacy of comicbooks mostly unknown to an English speaking public.

I made a few futile attempts to learn French and German in the early '90s specifically to read foreign comics, but gave up due to the usual British apathy to learning foreign languages. I can only hope that this venture is a success (the sales figures for **Metal Hurlant** don't bode well though) and that DC doesn't simply restrict its output to the stock science fiction/fantasy genres.

Is there any hope of an English language translation of Bourgeon's works? It is a crime against humanity that **Les Passagers du Vent** in particular doesn't have an English edition, as God surely meant it to...

Credit where due

Alan R Woollcombe via e-mail: alanwoollcombe@yahoo.com

NICE treatment over the death of Don Lawrence, but flattering as it is to see my name appended to his obituary, I really can't claim sole credit for it.

The true oracle behind the piece was Steve Holland. For those interested (besides my mother), Steve provided 90% of the research and wrote the good bits, while I supplied the joined-up lettering and took the credit. Hmm, on second thoughts that sounds like a fair split to me...

A sobering thought

David Robinson via e-mail: ivlem99@hotmail.com

I AGREE with your comment about Don Lawrence being one of a generation, and it's a sobering thought that – by the time we're (really) old – most of the names we knew in showbiz (vide Monkhouse) as well as in comics/comix will have passed on.

The flipside of the angst when we lose a comics creator is the fact this draws a line which helps define their life's work, so the collector has limits within which to work; but I can't say that this is a benefit.

Directory

An at-a-glance reference guide to everything that counts in comics

Internet Listings

Comics creators

Jessica Abel ..... www.artbabe.com
Neal Adams ..... www.nealadams.com
Kyle Baker ..... www.kylebaker.com
Leo Baxendale ..... www.reaper.co.uk/main.htm
Brian Bolland Art ..... www.velouria.com/Bolland
Mark Bright ..... www.mdbright.com
Eddie Campbell ..... www.eddiecampbellcomics.com
John Cassaday ..... www.johncassaday.com
Gene Colan ..... www.genecolan.com
Chuck Dixon ..... www.dixonverse.com
Will Eisner ..... www.willeisner.tripod.com
Warren Ellis ..... www.warrenellis.com
Phil Foglio ..... www.studiofoglio.com
Jon Haward ..... www.jonhawardart.com
Jeff Jones ..... www.jeffreyjones.com
Bob Layton ..... www.boblayton.com
Joseph Michael Linsner ..... www.linsner.com
Tom Lyle ..... www.tomlyle.com
Scott McCloud ..... www.scottmcloud.com
Grant Morrison ..... www.grant-morrison.com
Alex Ross Art ..... www.alexrossart.com
Dave Stevens ..... www.davestevens.com
William Stout ..... www.williamstout.com
Bryan Talbot ..... www.bryan-talbot.com
Barry Windsor-Smith .. www.barrywindsor-smith.com
Bernie Wrightson ..... www.berniewrightson.com

Comics publishers

Abstract Studios ..... www.strangersinparadise.com
AC Comics ..... www.accomics.com
Acclaim ..... www.acclaim.com/comics
AiT/Planet Lar ..... www.astronautsintrouble.com
Antarctic Press ..... www.antarctic-press.com
Archie Comic Publications .. www.archiecomics.com
Caliber Comics ..... www.calibercomics.com
Cartoon Books ..... www.boneville.com
Chaos! ..... www.chaoscomics.com
Cool Beans World ..... www.coolbeansworld.com
Com.X ..... www.comxcomics.com
CrossGeneration Comics ..... www.crossgen.com
Crusade Entertainment ..... www.shiweb.com
Dark Horse ..... www.darkhorse.com
DC Comics ..... www.dccomics.com
Drawn and Quarterly ... www.drawnandquarterly.com
Dynamic Forces ..... www.dynamicforces.com
Fantagraphics ..... www.fantagraphics.com
Harris Comics ..... www.vampirella.com
Heavy Metal ..... www.heavymetal.com
Knockabout Comics ..... www.knockabout.com
Marvel Comics ..... www.marvel.com
Northern Lightz ..... www.northernlightz.com
Oni Press ..... www.onipress.com
Quality/Warrior ..... www.comicsinternational.com
Sirius Entertainment . www.sirius.choiceoneonline.com
Todd McFarlane Productions .... www.spawn.com
Top Cow Comics ..... www.topcow.com
TwoMorrows ..... www.twomorrows.com
2000 AD www.2000ADonline.com
Viz (USA) ..... www.viz.com
Viz (UK) ..... www.viz.co.uk
WildStorm Comics ..... www.wildstorm.com

Manga and anime

AD Vision ..... www.advfilms.com
MVM ..... www.mvm-uk.co.uk

Downloadable software

PANELSYS
THE ULTIMATE PANELOLOGIST'S DATABASE SYSTEM FOR ORGANISING YOUR PRIZED COLLECTION! TAKE A FREE TRIAL TODAY ..... www.panelsys.com

On-line auctions

COMIC BOOK POSTAL AUCTIONS
Ten successful years specialising in Golden & Silver Age, artwork and vintage UK comics ..... www.compalcomics.com

eBay ..... www.ebay.co.uk
Heritage Comics Auctions www.heritagecomics.com

NEAR MINT
THE NEWEST TRULY ONLINE AUCTION SYSTEM, DEDICATED TO THE COLLECTIBLE MARKETPLACE ..... www.near-mint.com

Fantasy art and books

THE DRAGONS GALLERY
'SHOP ON-LINE' FOR ORIGINAL COMIC ART, LITHOS, MANGA, FANTASY AND GOTHIC ART ..... www.thedragonsgallery.co.uk

Festivals and fairs

Amadora Festival (Portugal) www.bdamadora.com
Angouleme BD (France)..... www.bdangouleme.com
Comic-Con International (San Diego, USA) ..... www.comic-con.org
Lucca Comics (Italy) ..... www.comune.lucca.it
Megacon (Florida, USA).. www.megaconvention.com
Raptus International Festival (Norway) www.raptus.no
Scottish Comic, Card & Collectables Fair ..... e-mail: marts@redhotcomics.demon.co.uk
Wizard World (Chicago, USA) www.wizarduniverse.com

New and back issue dealers

Ace Comics ..... www.acecomics.net
Avalon Comics ..... www.avaloncomics.co.uk
Black Dog Comics ..... www.blackdog-comics.com

CHAOS CITY COMICS
AWARD-WINNING SITE. HIGH GRADE SILVER AGE ITEMS & DAVE GIBBONS ORIGINAL ART ..... www.chaoscitycomics.com

COMIC BIZ
"BRITAIN'S FAVOURITE COMIC-BOOK COMPANY" Over 250,000 items for sale ..... www.comic-biz.com

Comics 24-7.co.uk www.comics247.co.uk
Comics & Collectables www.comicsandcollectables.co.uk
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COMIX-SHOP.CO.UK
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Krypton Komics ..... www.kryptonkomics.com

MEGA-CITY COMICS
LARGEST GRAPHIC NOVEL CATALOGUE IN THE COUNTRY - FAST & EASY ONLINE SHOPPING ..... www.megacitycomics.co.uk

Mighty World of Comicana.... www.comicana.com

OBSCURE COMICS
FOR THOSE COMICS THAT YOU CAN'T FIND ANYWHERE. CHEAP TOO! ..... www.obscurecomics.com

Page 45 ..... www.page45.com

QUICKSILVER COMICS
THE SPECIALIST SILVER AND BRONZE AGE SITE. OVER 100,000 ITEMS LISTED, ALL WITH COVER IMAGES .. www.qscomics.com

SILVER ACRE COMICS
OVER 900,000 COMICS IN STOCK, 110,000 DIFFERENT ITEMS LISTED ONLINE .....www.silveracre.com

Speeding Bullet..... www.speedingbulletcomics.co.uk

On-line comics companies:

By popular demand, **Comics International** now runs an at-a-glance overview of the major sites for on-line comics collectors and creators. Have your company listed for only £5 (US $8) a month. Bookable in six-issue blocks, companies wishing to be included should send £30 or US $40 (UK: please add £5.25 to cover VAT) with trading name and website address.

♦ Major companies requiring bold and boxed entries should send £60 + £10.50 VAT per six-issue series, US $80 (£10/$16 per issue) and may add three lines of descriptive copy. Cheques and international money orders should be made payable to Comics International and sent to:
Comics International, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ
Alternatively, payment can be made by credit card, fax: 0(11 44) 1273 566 333 or e-mail details to: comicsinternational@yahoo.co.uk

Retail Index: UK

Key to the abbreviations used:

imp = air imported new issues
back = back issues stocked
gn = graphic novels
tpbk = trade paperbacks
STO = standing order service (new comics reserved)
s-p = small press and fanzines
ind = independent comics
u/g = underground comix
prl = peripherals/supplies
RPG = role playing games
CCG = customisable card games
merch = trading cards, videos, t-shirts, posters, etc

Sorry, no websites, this is a shop guide

When telephoning from outside the UK, drop the first 0 and replace with: 01144 (USA); 0044 (mainland Europe & Eire); 001144 (Australasia).

Central London

Avalon Comics, 143 Lavender Hill, Battersea, London SW11 5QJ. Mon-Thurs 10-5.45; Fri 10-6.30; Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 11-3.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 020 7924 3609

Book & Comic Exchange, 14 Pembridge Road, Notting Hill Gate, London W11. Mon-Sun 10-8. Nothing legal refused! (back, ind, u/g) 020 7229 8420

Comic Showcase 63 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H ONE. Sun-Wed 10-7; Thurs-Fri 10-8; Sat 9.30-8 (imp, back, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, cartoon books, original art) 020 7434 4349

Forbidden Planet Megastore, 179 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8JR. Mon-Sat 9.30-7; Sun 12-6 (imp, back, gn, STO, s-p, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, sci-fi/fantasy, books, video/DVD, games, mags, toys) 020 7420 3666

Gosh!, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH (opposite British Museum). Mon-Sun 10-6 (Thurs-Fri to 7) (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, foreign, largest range newspaper strip compilations in UK) 020 7636 1011

Mega-City Comics, 18 Inverness Street, Camden Town, London NW1 7HJ. Mon-Sun 10-6 (Thurs-Fri to 7) (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV, fantasy/horror, body art, subculture) 020 7485 9320

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftsbury Avenue, London WC2H 8EH. Mon-Wed 10.30-6.30; Thurs-Sat 10-7; Sun 10-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, film/TV/fantasy) 020 7836 5630

Orbital, 9 Old Compton Street, London W1. Mon-Sat 10.30-7; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, manga, toys, Star Wars) 020 7434 9363

Outer London

A Place in Space, 101 Church Street, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1RN. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, prl, merch, sci-fi, original art) 020 8686 2400

Ashcan Ltd, 3 Eagle Star House, 299-301 High Street, Sutton, Surrey SM1 1LG. Tues-Wed/Fri 12-5; Thurs 9-6; Sat 10-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch) 0845 166 2532

Atomic Comics, 1112 High Road, Chadwell Heath, Romford, Essex RM6 4AH. Mon-Tues 10.30-5.30; Wed 1-5.30; Thurs-Fri 10.30-6; Sat 10-6 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV, art books, Games Workshop, toys, kits) 020 8597 8547

Black Angel Comics, Merton Abbey Mills, Watermill Way, Merton Abbey, London SW19 5WG. Sat-Sun 10-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, merch) 07771 502618

Calamity Comics, 160 Station Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2HR. Mon-Wed 10-6, (Thurs-Fri to 7); Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, fantasy film/TV, books, videos) 020 8427 3831

Epic Heroes, 21/23 Station Road, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 7JE. Mon-Sat 10-6. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, RPG, CCG, merch, toys, posters, Transformers)

Forbidden Planet, 175 North End, Croydon CR0 1TP. Mon-Fri 10-6 (Thursday to 7); Sat 9.30-6. (back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, u/g, CCG, merch) 020 8688 7190

Into the Void, 262 Streatham High Road, Streatham SW16 1HS. Mon-Sat 9.30-7; Sun 11-3. (imp, back, STO, merch, toys) 020 8677 7037

Krypton Komics, 252 High Road, Tottenham, London N15 4AJ (next to Tesco) Mon-Fri 10.30-6; Sat 10-6 Nearest Tube: Seven Sisters Road. (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind) 020 8801 5378 fax: 8376 3174

They Walk Among Us, 26 Red Lion Street, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1RW. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (Thurs to 6); Sun 11-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, fantasy/sci-fi/horror, subculture) tel/fax: 020 8948 8476

30th Century Comics, 18 Lower Richmond Road, London SW15 1JP. Mon-Wed 10.30-6; Thurs-Fri 10.30-7; Sat 10.30-6; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, Gold/Silver/Bronze Age specialists, British comics/annuals, books) 020 8788 2052

South East

Ace Comics, 63/64 High Street, Colchester, Essex. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch) 01206 561912

The American Comic Shop, 1 Church Street, Chatham, Kent ME4 4BS (off High Street). Mon-Fri 10-5.30 (Tues until 5); Sat 9-5.30. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, action figures) 01634 817410

Calamity Comics 2, 90 Queens Road, The Broadway, Watford WD1 2LA. Mon-Tues 10-5.30; Thurs/Fri 10-7; Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, fantasy film/TV, books, videos) 01923 249293

Cartoon Shop, 19 East Square, Basildon, Essex SS14 1HT. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, RPG, merch) 01268 534194

Central City Comics, 4 Eagle Street, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 1JB. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, foreign) 01473 233017

Chaos City, 20 Heritage Close, (off High Street), St Albans, Herts AL3 4EB. Mon-Thurs 10-5.30; Fri 10-7.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) 01727 838719

Comic Showcase, 19-20 St Clements Street, Oxford OX4 1AB. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 01865 723680

Comix-shop.co.uk, 7a High Street, Maidenhead SL6 1JN. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, tpbk, gn, merch, CCG, toys) 01628 777998

David's Comic Shop, 5 Sydney Street, Brighton, Sussex BN1 4EN. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.45; Sun 11-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g) 01273 691012

Daydream Nation Trading Cards at Hive, 6 Kensington Gardens, Brighton BN1 4AL. Mon-Sat 10-6 (CCGs, cards, sports, Ultra-Pro) 01273 687 877

Forbidden Planet, 60 Burleigh Street, Cambridge CB1 1DJ. Mon-Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, CCG, merch, videos, sci-fi/fantasy books, film/TV magazines) 01223 301666

Forbidden Planet, 44 The Priory Centre, Dartford, Kent DA1 2HS. Mon-Wed 10.30-5.30; Thurs-Sat 10-5.30 (back, gn, ind, PRG, CCG, merch) 01322 224837

Incognito Comic Shop, 1-2 The Friars, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2AS. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 11-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, film/TV) tel/fax: 01227 785898

Off World: The Sci-Fi Store, 142 Market Halls, Arndale Centre, Luton LU1 2TP. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, STO, s-p, CCG, merch, Star Trek/Wars, sci-fi collectables) 01582 736256

Phoenix Fantasy, 9 Market Street, Margate, Kent CT9 1EU. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch) 01843 224768

Planet Ace, 324-325 Chartwell North, Top Floor, Victoria Plaza, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 5SR. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch) 01702 613021

Slough Computers, 50 Village Shopping Centre, Slough, Berks SL1 1HP. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, STO, ind, cards, second hand computer games) 01753 521594

Speeding Bullet Comics, 43 Hermitage Road, Hitchin, Herts SG5 1BY. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30 (Wed 10-5); Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, s-p, merch, STO, CCG, action figures, original artwork, life-size Spidey mannequin for hire) 01462 451117

Time Trek, 46 High Street, Bromley, Kent BR1 1EG. Mon-Wed/Fri 9.30-5.30; Thurs 10-8; Sat 10-5.30; Sun 10-4 (imp, back, ind, gn, merch, STO, CCG, prl, sf TV/film) 020 8313 0677

Whatever Comics, 2 Burgate Lane, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2HH. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, kits) 01227 453226

Whatever Comics, 5 Middle Row, High Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1TF. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, model kits) 01622 681041

Midlands

Abstract Sprocket, 29 St Benedicts Street, Norwich, Norfolk NR2 4PF. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 01603 624410

Another World, 42/43 Main Centre (opposite Wilkinsons) Derby. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, merch, rock/film/TV memorabilia, computer games) 01332 206606

Another World, 23 Silver Street, Leicester LE1 5EU. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, foreign, alchemy metalware, rock memorabilia) 01162 515266

Another World, 11 Market Street, Nottingham. Mon-Fri 9-5.30; Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, foreign, rock memorabilia, alchemy metalware) 0115 9484122

Another World, 52 Stafford Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 1JB. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, rock memorabilia, alchemy metalware) 01782 279294 fax: 202381 Mail Order: 271750

Another World, 23 Victoria Street, Wolverhampton WV1 3NP. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, rock memorabilia, alchemy metalware) 01902 717440

Comic Culture, The Mall, 257-259 High Street, Lincoln LN2 1HX. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 9-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, prl) 01522 546611

Forbidden Planet, 31 Cross Cheaping, Coventry CV1 1HF. Mon-Sat 9.30-6 (Thurs to 7) (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV) 024 76229672

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 129 Middle Walk, Broadmarsh Centre, Nottingham NG1 7LN. Mon-Sat 9-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV) 0115 958 4706

Forbidden Planet Superstore, 38 Priory Queensway, Birmingham B4 7LA. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (Thurs-Fri to 6) (imp, back, gn, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, books, games, mags, kits, toys, videos) 0121 236 3026

Ground Zero, 9 Toothill Lane, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 1NJ. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, prl, CCG, merch, toys) 01623 622017

Nostalgia & Comics (FPI), 14-16 Smallbrook, Queensway, Birmingham. Mon-Thurs 9.15-5.45; Fri-Sat 9.15-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 0121 643 0143

Page 45, 9 Market Street, Nottingham NG1 6HY. Mon-Sat 9-6. (imp, back, gn, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, manga) 0115 950 8045

Phoenix Comix, 29 Abington Square, Northampton NN1 4AE. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, RPG, CCG, action figures) 01604 602311

Travelling Man, c/o Gamestation, 1st Floor, 6 East Street, Derby DE1. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, prl, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures, fantasy books, film/TV) 0115 950 9231

Travelling Man, c/o Gamestation, 1st Floor, 16 Angel Row, Nottingham NG1 6HL. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures, miniatures) 0115 950 9231

North West

All-American, 102 Newport Street, Bolton BL3 6AB. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, gn, STO, merch, Star Wars, WWF, action figures, S/Age, videos, records, CDs) 01204 366553

Alpha Omega Comics, 33-35 Library Street, Wigan, Lancs WN1 1NN. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, STO, merch, videos) 07796 854644

Forbidden Planet, 92 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (Thurs to 7) (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV, sci-fi/horror) 0151 707 1491

Forbidden Planet Megastore (FPI), 65 Oldham Street, Piccadilly, Manchester M1 1JR. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 12-5 (2 floors; imp, back, STO, RPG, CCG, merch, books, toys, film and TV tie-ins, manga) 0161 839 4777

Imagination Station, 41 Bank Street, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 8HJ. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch)

Millennium Comics, 4 Church Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 5NT. Mon-Tues 10-5; Wed closed; Thurs-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, RPG, merch, action figures, toys) 01606 49255

Moonwalk Collectables, Unit 15, Climax Works, Durham Street (off Station Road), North Redditch SK5 6YZ. Mon-Sat 10-6 (back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, merch, Star Wars and Dr Who specialist, TV/film, British titles) 0161 431 6050

Thunderbooks, 332 Lytham Road, Blackpool FY4 1DW. Mon/Tues/Thurs-Sat (Sun June-Oct inc) 10-5.30; Wed 1-3.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, media collectors' items) 01253 348321 fax: 407813

Thunderbooks II, 116 Friargate, Preston, PR1 9EE. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, RPG, merch) 01772 204287

Time Tunnel, 13 Earle Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 2BS. Mon and Wed-Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, merch, film/TV memorabilia, action figures, videos, model kits) 01270 215496

Twin Suns, 127 Blackburn Road, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 0AA. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, RPG, CCG, merch) 01254 386665

Worlds Apart (FPI), 58-60 Lime Street (city centre), Liverpool. Mon-Sat 10-6 (Fri 10-7) (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, film) 0151 707 0839

North East

Books N' Comics, Unit 15, Forbes Building, Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS1 4AW. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, merch, fantasy and film magazines, Doctor Who/Star Trek) 01642 249143

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 30 Eastgate, The Headrow, Leeds LS2 7JL. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, LF film books, film/TV mags, posters, toys, kits, trading cards, stills, Star Trek/Doctor Who) 0113 242 6325

Forbidden Planet, 59 Grainger Street, Newcastle NE1 5JE. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV mags, fantasy/sci-fi books, videos) 0191 261 9173

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 41 Dundas Street, Middlesbrough TS1 1HR. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (Thurs until 7) (imp, gn, s-p, STO, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch, video, action figures, film/TV, manga) 01642 248889

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 12 Matilda, off the Moor, Sheffield. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 9.30- 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, original art, model kits, sci-fi/fantasy books, horror magazines, newspaper strip books) 0114 276 9475

The Last Picture Show, 38-39 The Lanes, The Oasis, Meadowhall Centre, Sheffield S9 1EP. Mon-Thurs 10-8; Fri 10-9; Sat 9-7, Sun 11-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV and rock memorabilia) 0114 256 9604 fax: 255 3399

Millennium Comics, Stall 141, Warrington Indoor Market. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, RPG, merch, action figures, toys) 01925 575657

Off-World Comics, 200 Park View, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear NE26 3QP. Mon-Tues/Thurs 10-5.30 (closed Wed); Fri 10-6; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, CCG, merch) 0191 251 2288

Sheffield Space Centre, 33 The Wicker, Sheffield. Mon-Sat 10-5 (Wed

closed) (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, merch, Star Trek) 0114 275 8905

Travelling Man, Unit 8/9, The Corn Exchange, Call Lane, Leeds LS1 7BR. Mon-Thurs 10-5.30; Fri-Sat 9-5.30; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures) 0113 242 7227

Travelling Man, 54 Goodramgate, York YO1 2LF. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures) 01904 628787

West Country

American Dream Comics, 72 Walcot Street, Bath BA1 5BD. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, original art, hobby kits, CDs) 01225 424881

Area 51, 143 Gloucester Road, Bristol. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, original art) 0117 924 4655

Automattic Comics, Unit 2, 17 Pickwick Road, Corsham SN13 9BQ. Mon-Tues 12-5; (Wed closed); Thurs-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 01249 701647

Collector's Choice, 45 Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1TX. Mon-Sat 9-5 (S/Age, British comics/annuals, vintage mags, toys, memorabilia) 01452 410232

Forbidden Planet, 30 Penn Street, Bristol BS1 3AS. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30 (Thurs to 7); Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV mags, subculture) 0117 929 8692

Forbidden Planet, 43-45 East Street, Southampton SO14 3HN. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30 (Thurs to 6); Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV) 023 80230991 fax: 230996

Ian's Books & Comics, 195a Albert Road, Southsea, Portsmouth PO4 0JP (next to Tesco). Mon-Tues/Thurs-Fri 10.30-5.15 (Wed closed); Sat 10-5.15 (imp, back, tpbk, STO, s-p, prl, toys) 023 92422731

Into the Void, 11 Rodbourne Road, Swindon SN2 2AG. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, CCG, merch) 01793 434363

Kaboom, 65 High Street, Totnes, Devon TQ10 9PU. (new, back, action figures, t-shirts, board games, RPG, import computer games, mail order) 01803 863049

Kathies Comics, Unit BG29, Broadmead Gallery, The Galleries Shopping Centre, Bristol BS1 3XB. Mon-Wed/Fri-Sat 9-5.30; Thurs 9-6; Sun 11-5.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 0117 922 1170

Kathies Comics, 20 Market Avenue, Plymouth, PL1 1PH. Mon-Fri 9.30- 5.30; Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 01752 257800

Paradox Comics, 17 High Street, Poole, Dorset BH15 1AB. Mon-Fri 10.30-5; Sat 10-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, ind, merch, videos) 01202 661346

Wonderworld, 540 Christchurch Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset. Mon-Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, CCG, merch, film/TV/media, beanie babies) 01202 394918

Wales

Cardiff Fantasy Centre, 1st Floor, Jacobs Market, West Canal Wharf, Cardiff. Sat 9.30-4.30 (imp, back, STO; established over 20 years) 029 206 58184 (eves)

Comix Shoppe, 13 Shoppers Walk, Swansea SA1 3AY. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, anime, Games W/shop) 01792 642097

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 5 Duke St, Cardiff. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, sci-fi fantasy/horror books, Star Trek/Wars) 029 202 28885

Negative Zone, Provision Market Gallery, High Street, Newport, Gwent NP9 1DD. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, s-p, ind; established for 11 years) 01633 222159

Scotland

Asylum Books & Games, 29 Adelphi, Aberdeen AB11 5B2. Mon-Sat 10-6 (Mon/Thurs to 8); Sun 12-5 (imp, back, STO, new/second hand RPG, CCG, books, original art) 01224 574637

Black Hole Comic Shop, Unit 3, 5 Victoria Road, Dundee DD1 1ER. Mon-Thurs 10-5; Fri-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, second hand records, CDs, videos) 01382 221037

City Centre Comics, 51 Parnie Street, Glasgow G1 5LU. Tues-Sat 10-5 (back) 0141 552 2208

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 12 Schoolhill, Aberdeen AB10 1JX. Mon-Fri 10-6 (Thurs until 7); Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 12-5 (imp, gn, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, CCG, merch) 01224 622131

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 40-41 South Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1LL. Mon-Wed 10-5.30; Thurs 10-6.30; Fri-Sat 10-5.30; Sun 12-5. (imp, STO, s-p, ind, merch, foreign) 0131 558 8226

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 168 Buchanan St, Glasgow G1 2LW. Mon-Sat 10-5.30; Sun 12-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 0141 331 1215

Justice Comics, Unit 36, The Arcade, Stirling FK8 1AX. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch) 01786 447687

Kapow!, 28 Allison Street, Govanhill, Glasgow G42 8NN (off Pollokshaws Road). Tues-Sat 11-6 (buy and sell back, gn, ind, mags, videos, DVDs, new and second-hand books, merch) 0141 4241600

Plan 9, 9 Rosemount Viaduct, Aberdeen AB25 1NE. Mon-Sat 10-5 (Thurs to 6); Sun 1-4. (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, WWF, merch, sci-fi) tel/fax: 01224 624467

Red Hot Comics, Block D Unit 7, Glenwood Business Park, Glenwood Place, Glasgow G45 9UH. Sat 11.30-6; Sun 12-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 0141 630 0049

Northern Ireland

NEW **Crosshatch**, Unit 8, Smithfield Market, Belfast BT1 1JD. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 10-5.30 (original art, prints, autographs, cover recreations) 07739 871415

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 47 Winetavern Street, Belfast BT1 1JQ Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch) 028 90438744

Planet Ace Derry, 33 Shipquat St, Derry, Londonderry BT48 6DF. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) 02871 369787

Retail Index: USA

When telephoning from outside the USA, include the bracketed 00. Out-of-town US calls begin with the 1 prefix only. The following is a fraction of the estimated 3,000+ US comics stores.

Alabama

Optic Nerve, 1930 12th Avenue South, Birmingham, AL 35205 (film, newsstand, ind) (00)1 205 933 2787

Alaska

Bosco's in Spenard, 2606 Spenard Road, Anchorage 99503. Mon-Sat 11-8, Sun 12-6 (new, back, CCG, RPG, cards, anime, merch) (00) 1 907 274 4112

Bosco's Diamond Centre, 800 East Diamond Boulevard, Anchorage 99577. Mon-Fri 10-9; Sat 10-6; Sun 12-5 (new, back, CCG, RPG, cards, anime, games, Star Wars/Trek) (00) 1 907 344 3963

Bosco's in Eagle River, 11432 Business Boulevard, Eagle River. Mon-Sat 12-8, Sun 12-5 (new, back, CCG, RPG, cards, merch) (00) 1 907 696 5166

Arizona

Lost Dutchman, 747 West Camelback Road, Phoenix, AZ 85013. Mon-Sun 10-7. (new, back) (00)1 619 278 0371

California

Comickaze, 5525 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, San Diego, CA 62117-2342. Mon-Fri.11-7; Sat 11-6; Sun 12-6 (new, back, CCG, merch)(00)1 858 278 0371

Comix Experience, 305 Divisadero Street, San Francisco, CA 94117. Mon-Sat 11-7; Sun 12-5 (new, back) (00)1 415 863 9258

Flying Colors Comics, 2980 Treat Blvd, Concord, CA 94518. Mon-Sat 11-7 (Fri until 8); Sun 12-6 (new, back, ind, cards, merch) (00)1 510 825 5410

Lee's Comics, Inc., 1020-F N Rengstorff Avenue, Mountain View, CA 94043. Mon-Sun 10-9 (new, back: 1930s to date, anime, manga, s-p, adult, merch) (00)1 650 965 1800

Lee's Comics, Inc., 2222 South El Camino Real, San Mateo, CA 94403. Mon-Sun 10-9, (new, back: 1930s to date, anime, manga, adult, s-p, merch) (00)1 650 571 1489

Meltdown Comics & Collectibles, 7522 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90046 (toys, comics, books) (00)1 323 851 7223

Stand-Up Comics, 10020 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530. Mon-Fri 11 7; Sat-Sun 11-6 (new, back, cards, anime, CCG, merch) (00)1 510 525 3344

Third Planet, 3822 Sepulveda Boulevard, Torrance, CA 90505. Sun-Thurs 11-8; Fri + Sat 11-9 (new, ind, back, CCG, RPG, GW, sci-fi/fantasy, anime, merch) (00)1 310 791 6227

Hawaii

Gecko Books & Comics, 3613 Waialae Avenue, Honolulu, 96816. Mon-Sun 9-9 (new, back, cards, toys, merch) (00)1 808 732 1292

Illinois

Comic Kingdom, 5941 W Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60634. (new, back) (00)1 773 545 2231

Louisiana

Comic Cosmos, 343 W Esplanade Avenue, Kenner, LA 70065. Mon-Thur 11.30-7, Fri-Sat 11-7.30, Sun 12-5 (new, back, cards, CCG, toys, anime) (00)1 504 286 0039

Crescent City Comics & Cards, 6111 Elysian Fields, New Orleans, LA 70122. Mon-Sat 11-7, Sun 12-6 (new, back, cards, CCG, RPG, anime) (00)1 504 286 0039

More Fun Comics, 8200 Oak Street, New Orleans, LA 70118. Tues-Sat 11-7, Sun-Mon 12-6 (new, back, cards, CCG, merch, toys, CDs) (00)1 504 865 1800

Maine

Casablanca Comics, 151 Middle Street, Portland, ME 04101. Mon-Sat 10-9, Sun 12-7 (new, back, cards, CCG, RPG, merch, art) (00)1 207 780 1676

Casablanca Comics, 778 Roosevelt Trail, Windham, ME 04062. Mon-Fri 11-7, Sat 10-6, Sun 12-5 (new, back, CCG, RPG, merch)(00)1 207 892 0056

Massachusetts

Comicopia, 464 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02215. Mon-Sun 11-7 (Wed 10-8) (new, merch, CCG, manga, tpbk)(00)1 617 266 4266

Minnesota

Uncle Sven's Comic Shoppe, 1838 St Clair Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55105. Mon-Fri 3-6, Sat 11-4 (new, back, tpbk, gn, videos, action figures, CCG, RPG; est 19 years) (00)1 651 699 3409

New York State

Earthworld Comics, 327 Central Avenue, Albany, NY 12206. Mon-Wed 11-6; Thur-Fri 11-7, Sat 11-6, Sun 12-5 (new, back, ind, manga/anime, cards, merch) (00)1 518 465 5495

Forbidden Planet (FPI associate), 840 Broadway (at 13th St, NY 10003. Mon-Sat 10-10; Sun 12-10. (new, ind, back, RPG, merch, fantasy) (00)1 212 473 1576

Jim Hanley's Universe Ltd, 4 West 33rd Street (opposite Empire State Building), NY 10001. Mon-Sat 9am-11pm; Sun 10-9. (Everything to do with comics) (00)1 212 268 7088

Jim Hanley's Universe Ltd, 325 New Dorp Lane, Staten Island, NY 10306. Mon-Sun; 12-9. (Everything to do with comics) (00)1 718 351 6299

Midtown Comics, 200 West 40th Street, NY 10018 (00)1 212 302-8192

Ohio

The Laughing Ogre, 4258 North High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43214. Mon-Sat 10-9; Sun 12-5 (new, back, cards, merch) (00)1 614 267 6473

Oklahoma

Time Warp, 588 SE Washington Street, Bartlesville, OK 74006 (new, back, cards, games, toys, CDs, sci-fi/fantasy) (00)1 918 335 3373

Pennsylvania

Comic Castle, 17 West Fourth Street, Williamsport, PA 17703 Mon-Sun 10-9 (new, back) (00)1 717 322 8763

Golden Eagle, Berkshire Square, 1159 Berkshire Boulevard, Wyoming, PA 19610 (new, back, games, CCG, cards, Star Wars/Trek) (00)1 610 376 8255

Golden Eagle, Fairgrounds Square Mall, Reading, PA 19605 (new, back, games, CCG, cards, Star Wars/Trek) (00)1 610 921 3160

Tennessee

Collector's World, 1511 E Main Street, Murfreesboro, TN 37130. Open all week (new, back, CCG, merch, cards, CDs) (00)1 615 895 1120

Collector's World, Hickory Plaza South Central, 5751 Nolensville Road, Nashville, TN 37211. Open all week (new, back, CCG, merch, cards, CDs) (00)1 615 895 1120

Collector's World, 10820 Kingston Park #10, Knoxville, TN 37922 Open all week (new, back, CCG, merch, cards, CDs) (00)1 423 675 6830

Collector's World, 4006 Granny White Park, Nashville, TN 37204 (new, back, CCG, merch)(00)1 615 385 8136

Texas

Cliff's Comics, 2205 West Berry Street, Fort Worth, TX 76110. (new, back, cards, merch) (00)1 817 927 7172

Collectible Heroes, 502 West Calton Road #307, Laredo, TX 78041. Mon-Wed 2-7.30; Thurs-Sat 11.30-7.30 (new, back, cards, merch) (00)1 956 791 8428

Dragon's Lair Comics & Fantasy, 616 West 34th Street, Austin, TX 78705 (new, back, games, anime, miniatures, prl) (00)1 512 454 2399

Virginia

Thore Comics, 3514 Oaklawn Boulevard, Hopewell, VA 23860. Mon-Sat 11-7, (new, back, Silver Age, sci-fi, M:TG, cards, vinyl)(00)1 804 458 9561

Trilogy Shop, 700 E Little Creek Road, Norfolk, VA 23518. Mon-Fri 11-7, Sat 10-7, Sun 12-6 (new, back, merch) (00)1 757 587 2540

Wisconsin

Lost World of Wonders, 6713 West Oklahoma Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53219 (00)1 414 328 4651

Direct Market Retailers:

Comics International's Retail Index is THE international retail reference source for collectors, creators, publishers and journalists. Through it you can reach over 40,000 dedicated readers each issue for only £6 (US $10) a month! Bookable in six-issue blocks, retailers wishing to be included should send US $60 or £36 (UK: please add £6.30 to cover VAT @ 17.5%) plus shop information as detailed on previous page to:

Comics International, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ

Cheques and international money orders should be made payable to Comics International. Alternatively, payment can be made by credit card, fax: 0(11 44) 1273 566 333 or e-mail: comicsinternational@yahoo.co.uk

The letters **(FPI)** after various entries indicates that the company is part of **Forbidden Planet International Ltd**

Retailers: International

Australia

Arcadia Unbound, 267 Forest Road, Hurstville, NSW 2220. Mon-Fri 10.30-7, Sat 10-4, Sun 12-3 (imp, back, manga, merch, CCG) (0061) 2 9585 1489

Books & Bounties/Comics Haven, 157a Charters Towers Road, Townsville, Queensland 4812. Mon-Sat 9-6 (imp, back, gn, merch, RPG, CCG) (0061) 7 4779 2408

Fan Attic, 1st Floor, 91 Elizabeth Street, Brisbane, Queensland 4002. Mon-Sun 9.30-5.30 (toys, Star Wars, sci-fi collectibles) (0061) 7 3221 1420

Kinda Lotsa Comics and Stuff, Shop 4, 503-511 King Street, Newtown, Sydney, NSW. Mon-Sat 10.30-7.30 (back, toys, merch)(0061) 2 9565 1054

Known Space Books, 1st Floor, 108 Gawler Place, Adelaide, SA 5000. Wed-Sat 12-6 (US/UK back) (0061) 8 8223 4304

Phantom Zone, 23 Anderson Street, Chatswood, NSW 2067. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4 (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 9411 3709

Phantom Zone, 198 Mann Street, Gosford, NSW 2250. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4. (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 43 25 4599

Phantom Zone, 207 George Street, Liverpool, NSW. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4. (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 9601 2622

Phantom Zone, 285 Hunter Street, Newcastle, NSW. 2300. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4. (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 4929 5717

Phantom Zone, 101a Argyle Street, Parramatta, NSW 2150 Mon-Fri 9-6; Sat-Sun 9-4 (imp, back, books, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 9891 1848

Phantom Zone, 268 Crown Street, Wollongong, NSW. 2500. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4 (imp, back, gn, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 4228 7393

Austria

Comic Treff, Getreidemarkt 2-4, 1010 Vienna. Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 10-1 (imp, back, gn, CCG) (0043) 11 586 76 27

Belgium

Forbidden Zone, 25 Rue de Tamines, 1060 Brussels. (3 floors; imp, back, merch, US/French, STO, toys) (0032 2) 534 63 67 (fax 538 24 52)

Canada

Connection MD, 1539 Van Horne Avenue, Montreal, Quebec H2V 1L4. Mon-Sat 11-6 (new, merch, back, CCG) (00)1 514 948 2627

Dragon Lady Comics & Paper Nostalgia, 609 College Street, Toronto, Ontario M6G 1B5. (00)1 416 536 7460

Little Shop of Heroes, 160 Wallace Avenue, South Listowel, Ontario N4W 1X9 (00)1 519 291 2281

Silver Snail Comic Shop, 367 Queen Street West, Toronto M5V 2A4. Mon-Wed 10-6; Thurs-Fri 11-8; Sat 10-6; Sun 12-5 (00)1 416 593 0889

France

Album, 67 boulevard St Germain, 75005 Paris. Mon-Sat 10-8; Sun 12-7 (imp, back, gn) (0033) 53 10 00 60

Album, 6 rue Dante, 75005 Paris. Mon-Sat 10-8; Sun 12-7 (imp, back, gn) (0033) 43 54 67 09

Alpha Omega, 25 rue de la Clef, 59800 Lille. Mon 2.30-7.30, Tue-Sat 10.30-12.30/2.30-7.30 (imp, back, French, merch, trading/gaming cards, toys, RPG, Wars/Trek, B5, L5R) (0033) 320 319 375

Astro City, 22 rue Masurel, 59800 Lille. Mon 3-7.30; Tue-Sat 10-12.30, 2-7.30 (imp, manga, cards, merch, kits) (0033) 320 55 1010

Impact Comics, 64 rue Condorcet, 75009 Paris. Mon-Sat 11-7.30 (imp, back, merch, CCG)(0033) 42 80 30 10

L'Antre des Dragons, 56 rue de Loup, 33000 Bordeaux. Mon-Sat 10-1/2-7 (imp, manga, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0033) 55 65 17378

Les Nageurs de Sable, 14 rue Courteline, 37058 Tours. Mon-Sat 11-1/2-7 (imp, back, cards, merch) (0033) 2 47 39 52 40

Pulps, 14 bld Morland, 75004 Paris. Mon-Sat 11-7 (imp, back, RPG) (0033) 1 42 72 55 25

Germany

Black Dog Comics, Rodenberg Strasse 9, 10439 Berlin. Mon-Fri 11-6.30, Sat 11-2 (imp, back, gn, t/cards) (0049) 30 4473 6486

Grober Unfug, Zossenerstrasse 32-33, 10961 Berlin. Mon-Sat 11-7 (imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (0049) 30 6940 1490

Greece

Metropolis Comics, 94 Metropoleos St, 54622 Thessaloniki. Mon-Sat 10.30-3.30/7.30-11.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0030) 3 193 7775

Solaris, 6 Botasi Str, 10682, Athens. Mon-Sat 9-3.30/5-8.30 (imp, back, gn, merch) (0030) 1 384 1065

Holland

Henk Lie's Comics & Manga Store, Zeeduk 104, 1012BB Amsterdam. Mon-Sat 11-6; Sun 11-9 (imp, cards, merch, CCG) (0031) 20 421 3688

Hungary

Troll Kepregenyta'r, Terez Krt 13, Budapest 1067. Mon-Fri 10-6, Sat 10-1(imp, manga, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0036) 1 322 6026

Irish Republic

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 5-6 Crompton Quay, Dublin 2. Mon-Sat 10-6 (Thurs 10-7); Sun 12-5 (imp, back, ind, merch, u/g, UK, gn, STO) (0035) 3167 10688

Sub-City Comics, 2 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) (0035) 3167 71902

Sub-City Comics, Unit 10, Level 1, Corbettcourt Centre, Eyre Square, Galway. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) (0035) 3915 65994

The 3rd Place, Crow Street, Temple Bar, Dublin 2. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) (0035) 3163 36965

Italy

Avalon, via Battisti 9/b, Bologna. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10.30-1/2-7.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 051 234459

Avalon, via Pedriali 21, Forli. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10-1/2-7 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 0543 33523

Avalon, via Settembrini 20, Milan. Mon 3.30-7.30, Tue-Sat 11-7.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 022 9400410

Avalon, via Foscolo 3, Padova. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10-1/2-7. (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch)(0039) 049 658290

Avalon, via Bissolati 68, Rome. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10-1/2-7 (imp, back, gn, CCG, cards, merch)

Avalon, via Magenta 0, Torino. Mon 3.30-7, Tue-Sat 10.30-1, 2-7.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 011 5617252

Forbidden Planet, via Pinerolo 11/15, 00182 Rome (imp, back, gn) (0039) 06 70305702

Il Marchio Giallo, via Deghi Scipioni 116, Rome. Tue-Sat 10.30-1/2-7.30 (imp, back, merch, kits) (0039) 06 361 40 60

La Borsa del Fumetto, via Lecco 16, 20124 Milano. (imp, back, European and RPG, CCG) (0039) 11 5617252

Malaysia

The Mind Shop, Starhill Centre, Jalang Bukit Bintag, Kuala Lumpur. Mon-Sat 11-10 (imp, CCG, RPG, merch) (00603) 241 8871

The Mind Shop, S 58 Bandar Utama, Petaling Jaya. Mon-Sat 11-10 (imp, CCG, RPG, merch) (00603) 719 8246

The Mind Shop, Jin SS21/39, Petaling Jaya. Mon-Sat 11-10 (imp, CCG, RPG, merch) (00603) 717 6602

New Zealand

Heroes For Sale, Level 2, 62 Queen St, Auckland. Mon-Sat 10-7 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g)(0064) 9 307 0682

Whitcoulls Corner Branch, 210 Queen Street, Private Bag 92098, Auckland. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, s-p, merch, ind, u/g) (0064) 9 356 5400 (fax: 9 356 5408)

Portugal

BdMania, Rua das Flores 67-71 R/C, 1200 Lisboa. Mon-Sat 11-7.30 (imp, back, CCG, merch) (00351) 21 346 1207

Interzona, Centro Comercial Brasilia, Loja 203, Rua Luis Veaga Lertao 98-120, 6050 Porto. Mon-Sat 11-11 (imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (00351) 22 609 1460

Mundo Fantasma, Centro Comercial Brasilia, Rua Luis Veiga Leitao, 98/120, 1 Andar-Loja 203, 4050-399 Porto. Mon-Sat 11-11 (US imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (00351) 22 609 1460

South Africa

Euroniag, Shop 79A, East Rand Mall, Boksburg, Johannesburg. Mon-Sun 9-10 (imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (0027) 11 896 3773

Zed Bree's Comic Universe, Mediterr-anean Building, 24 Tenth Ave, Edenvale 1610 Gauteng. 9.30-6 (imp, merch, gn, CCG) 00271 453 4215 (fax 453 4459)

Spain

Gigamesh, RDA San Pedro 53, 08010 Barcelona. Mon-Sat 10-1.30/4.30-8 (imp, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0034) 3 246 6359

Sweden

Comics Heaven, Stora Nygatan 23, 11127 Stockholm. Mon-Sat 10-6.30 (imp, back, gn, merch)(0046) 8 202516

Switzerland

Analph Comicladen Strassburgstr, 10 PO Box 1030, 8004 Zürich. (0041) 1 2419695 fax 1 2403442

The letters **(FPI)** after entries indicate that the company is part of **Forbidden Planet International Ltd**

International Festivals

A listing of the world's major comics festivals and conventions. For further information, call the organisers on the phone, fax or e-mail numbers provided. To view updates, contact them on their websites. Organisers' estimates of their previous year's attendance is given in brackets.

March 5-7: United States

MEGACON 2004, Orange County Convention Centre, Orlando, Florida. Organisers MegaCon, 4023 Tampa Road - Suite 2400, Oldsmar, FL 34677, USA. Tel: 001 813 891 1702. Website: www.megaconvention.com

April 17-18: England

MEMORABILIA '04, NEC, Birmingham. Organisers: Made in Heaven, 1 Star Street, Moffat, Dumfriesshire DG10 9DR. Tel: 01683 220787 fax: 01683 220798. Website: www.memorabilia.co.uk

May 6-9: Spain

THE 22ND BARCELONA INTERNATIONAL COMIC FESTIVAL. (2003 est: 85,000). Organisers: Ficomic, Palau, 4 Baixos, 08002 Barcelona, Spain. Tel: 0034 93 301 23 69 fax: 0034 93 301 52 26. Website: www.ficomic.com

May 15-16: England

LONDON EXPO, ExCel Convention Centre, Royal Victoria Dock, London E16, UK. Organisers:London Expo (EW), PO Box 38727, London E10 7YH. Tel: 020 8523 1074. Website: www.londonexpo.com

May 21-23: Finland

ARCTIC COMICS FESTIVAL, KEMI. Organisers: The Arctic Comics Centre, Rautatienkatu 13 B, FIN-90100 Oulu, Finland. Tel/fax: 00358 400 514 540. Website: www.kemi.fi/sarjis

May 29-30: England

Comics Festival 2004, The Empire and Commonwealth Museum and Ramada Plaza Hotel, Bristol. Organiser: Kev F. Sutherland. Website: www.comicfestival.co.uk

June 10-13: Switzerland

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE LA BANDE DESSINEE DE SIERRE. Organisers: Festival BD Sierre, CP 200, CH-3960 Sierre, Switzerland. Tel: 0041 27 455 90 43 fax: 0041 27 455 91 01. Website: www.bdsierre.ch

July 22-25: United States

COMIC-CON INTERNATIONAL '04, San Diego, California. (2003 est: 53,000). Organisers: Comic-Con International, PO Box 128458, San Diego, CA 92112-8458. Tel: 001 619 491 2475 fax: 001 619 414 1022. Website: www.comic-con.org

July: England

MEMORABILIA '04, NEC, Birmingham. Organisers: Made in Heaven, 1 Star Street, Moffat, Dumfriesshire DG10 9DR. Tel: 01683 220787 fax: 01683 220798. Website: www.memorabilia.co.uk Date: TBA

August 13-15: United States

WIZARD WORLD CHICAGO CON 2004. (2003 est: 35,000) Organisers: Wizard World Chicago, 151 Wells Avenue, Congers, NY 10920-2064. Tel: 001 608 226 0200. Website: www.wizarduniverse.com

August 27-29: Canada

CANADIAN NATIONAL COMIC BOOK EXPO 2004, Metro Toronto Convention Center, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. (2003: 15,000) Website: www.hobbystar.com

August: Scotland

MEMORABILIA '04, The SECC, Glasgow. Organisers: Made in Heaven, 1 Star St, Moffat, Dumfriesshire DG10 9DR. Tel: 01683 220787 fax: 01683 220798. Website: www.memorabilia.co.uk Date: TBA

September 3-6: United States

DRAGON*CON 2004, Atlanta, Georgia. (2003: 20,000). Organisers: Dragon*Con, PO Box 16459, Atlanta, GA 30321-9998. Tel: 001 770 909 0115 fax: 001 770 909 0112. Website: www.dragoncon.org

Comics Publishers

North America

Unlike Europe, North American publishers invariably favour indie status to that of being labelled small press. This results in there being hundreds of comics publishers.

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AARDVARK-VANAHEIM, PO Box 1674 Station C, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2G 4R2 (Cerebus)

ABSTRACT STUDIOS, PO Box 271487, Houston, TX 77277-1487 (Strangers in Paradise)

AC COMICS, PO Box 521216, Longwood, FL 32752-1216 (adventure titles, Golden Age superhero and western reprints)

ACCLAIM COMICS, 1 Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542 (game tie-in adventure, Valiant superhero imprint. dormant) (00)1 516 656 5000

AiT/PLANET LAR, 2034 47th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94116 (graphic novels) (00)1 415 504 7516

ALTERNATIVE COMICS, 503 North West 37th Ave, Gainesville, FL 32609-2204 (alternative and graphic novels) (00)1 352 373 6336

AMERICAN MEDIA CONSUMER ENTERTAINMENT, INC, 600 East Coast Avenue, Lantana, Florida 33464 (Cracked) (00)1 561 586 1111

ANTARCTIC PRESS, 7272 Wurzbach, Suite 204, San Antonio, Texas TX 78240 (adventure and US manga)

ARCHIE COMIC PUBLICATIONS, 325 Fayette Avenue, Mamaroneck, NY 10543 (humour) (00)1 914 381 5155

AVATAR PRESS, 9 Triumph Drive, Urbana, Illinois, IL 61802 (horror fantasy titles) (00)1 217 384 2211

AWESOME ENTERTAINMENT, 9744 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 402, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, CA 90212 (adventure titles; dormant)

BONGO ENTERTAINMENT, 1440 South Sepulveda Boulevard, 3rd Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (The Simpsons and related humour titles) (00)1 310 966 6168

CALIBER COMICS, PO Box 6191, Plymouth, MI 48170 (black and white adventure titles) (00)1 734 462 0457

CARTOON BOOKS, PO Box 16973, Columbus, OH43216 (Bone and related)

CROSSGENERATION COMICS, 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400, Oldsmar, FL 34677 (fantasy adventure) (00)1 813 891 1702

CRUSADE FINE ARTS LTD, PO Box 845, Bayport, NY 11705 (fantasy and adventure) (00)1 631 472 2866

DARK HORSE COMICS, 10956 South East Main Street, Milwaukie, OR 97222 (adventure titles, licensed, US and Japanese manga) (00)1 503 652 8815

DC COMICS, 1700 Broadway, NY 10019 (adventure and humour, MAD, Vertigo and Paradox Press imprints) (00)1 212 636 5400

DISNEY COMICS, 500 South Buena Vista Street, Burbank, CA 91521 (humour titles) (00)1 818 507 5739

DRAWN & QUARTERLY, PO Box 48056, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2V 4SB (black and white biog)

DREAMWAVE PRODUCTIONS, 2750 14th Avenue, Suite 302, Markham, Ontario L3R 0B6, Canada

DYNAMIC FORCES, 155 Ninth Avenue, Suite E, Runnemede, NJ 08078 (variant editions and merchandise) (00)1 856 312 1040

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS, 7563 Lake City Way North East, Seattle, Washington 98115 (adventure, biographical and Eros adult) (00)1 206 524 1967

HARRIS COMICS, 1115 Broadway, 8th Floor, NY 10010 (Vampirella, fantasy and horror) (00)1 212 807 7100

HARVEY COMICS ENTERTAINMENTS, 100 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 91401 (humour) (00)1 310 451 3377

HEAVY METAL, 100 Merrick Road, Suite 400 East, The Rockville Center, NY 11570 (adult fantasy magazines and spin-off editions) (00)1 516 594 2130

HUMANOIDS PUBLISHING, PO Box 931658, Hollywood, California CA 90093 (US-European editions) (00)1 714 2880200

IMAGE COMICS, 1440 North Harbor Boulevard, Suite 305, Fullerton, CA 92835 (adventure) (00)1 714 2880200

MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, 10th Floor, East 40th Street, New York, NY 10016 (adventure, humour and licensed) (00)1 212 696 0808

NBM PUBLICATIONS, 185 Madison Avenue, Suite 1504, NY 10016 (adult fantasy graphic novels and magazines)

ONI PRESS, 6336 South East Milwaukie Avenue, PMB 30, Portland, OR 97202 (adventure) (00)1 503 233 1377

RADIO COMIX, 11765 West Avenue, PMB 117, San Antonio, TX 78216 (anthropomorphic manga) (00)1 210 348 7195

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT, INC, PO Box 128, Stanhope, NJ 07874 (adult)

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS PUBLISHING, 848 The Almeda, San Jose, CA 95126 (black and white fantasy) (00)1 408 279 0451

TOP COW, 10390 Santa Monica Boulevard #110, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (adventure and licensed)

TOP SHELF PRODUCTIONS, PO Box 1282, Marietta, GA 30061-1282 (alternative and biographical) (00)1 770 425 0551

TWOMORROWS PUBLISHING, 1812 Park Drive, Raleigh, North Carolina, NC 27605 (comics feature magazines) (00)1 919 833 8092

VEROTIK PRESS, PO Box 64859, Los Angeles, CA 07043 (adult fantasies)

VIZ COMICS, PO Box 77010, San Francisco, CA 94107 (English translated manga)

WaRP GRAPHICS, 43 Haight Avenue, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 (Elfquest and spin-offs) (00)1 914 473 9277

WILDSTORM, 7910 Ivanhoe Street, #438 La Jolla, CA 92037 (includes ABC, Cliffhanger and Homage DC subsidiary imprints)

United Kingdom

The following are major UK newsstand comics and graphic novel publishers. If calling from outside of the UK, you should drop the first 0 and replace with: 01144 (USA); 0044 (mainland Europe and Eire); 001144 (Australasia).

DC THOMSON, Albert Square, Dundee DD1 9QJ (humour and adventure comics, pocket books and annuals)

EGMONT MAGAZINES LTD, 25-31 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9SU (humour, licensed and pre-school titles) 020 7344 6400

HAMLYN BOOKS, 2-4 Heron Quays, London E14 4JB (2000 AD graphic novels) 020 7531 8584

I FEEL GOOD LTD, 9 Dollington Street, London EC1V 0BQ (Viz) 020 7687 7000

JOHN BROWN PUBLISHING, The Boathouse, Crabtree Lane, Fulham, London SW6 (albums) 020 7381 6007

KNOCKABOUT COMICS, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (humour and underground comix, graphic novels) 020 8969 2945

PANINI COMICS (UK), Panini House, Coach and Horses Passage, The Pantiles, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TM2 5UJ (humour and adventure titles, Marvel licensed) 01892 500 100

REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS LTD, The Studio, Brewer Street, Oxford OX11QN (Judge Dredd Megazine and 2000 AD) 01865 792201

THE REDAN COMPANY, Canon Court East, Abbey Lawn, Shrewsbury SY2 5DE (pre-school humour and licenced titles) 01743 364433

SAVOY BOOKS, 446 Wilmslow Road, Withington, Manchester M20 3BW (adult comic magazines, books and graphic novels) 0161 833 2664

TITAN ENTERTAINMENT GROUP LTD, Titan House, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP (licensed graphic novels, books, magazines and comics) 020 7620 0200

France

The following are the country's major comics and album publishers. If phoning from the USA, the country code of 0033 becomes 011 33

ALBIN MICHEL, 22 rue Huyghens, 75014 Paris (albums) (0033) 1 42 79 10 00

CASTERMAN, 66 rue Bonaparte, 75006, Paris (albums and manga) (0033) 1 40 51 28 00

DARGAUD, 6 rue Gager Gabillot, 75015 Paris (albums and manga) (0033) 1 40 45 35 39

DELCOURT, 5 passage du Mont-Cenis, 75018 Paris (albums and comics) (0033) 1 53 41 86 10

FLUIDE GLACIAL, 33 avenue du Main, BP 187, 75755 Paris (comics and albums) (0033) 1 43 20 23 96

GLENAT, 31 rue Ernest Renan, 92130 Issy les Moulineaux (albums and manga) (0033) 1 41 46 11 11

J'AI LU, 84 rue de Grenelle, 75007 Paris (licenced Japanese manga) (0033) 1 44 39 34 70

LES HUMANOIDES ASSOCIES, 24 avenue Philippe Auguste, 75011 Paris (albums) (0033) 1 44 93 88 33

MARVEL, BP 62, 06702 St Laurent Duvar (0033) 1 92 12 57 57

SEMIC FRANCE, 45 rue Broca, 75005 Paris (licenced comics and albums) (0033) 1 43 36 32 00

Italy

The following are the country's major comics and album publishers. If phoning from the USA, the country code of 0039 becomes 011 39

SERGIO BONELLI EDITORE, via Buonarroti 38, 20145 Milano (black and white comics) (0039) 02 96480403

MARVEL ITALIA, viale Emilio Po' 380, 41100 Modena (Marvel licensed titles)

CULT COMICS, viale Emilio Po' 380, 41100 Modena (Image and Dark Horse licensed)

MAGIC PRESS, Zona industriale via Ragusa 18, 00040 Pavona, Roma (Vertigo and WildStorm licensed) fax: (0039) 06 93020361

STAR COMICS, strada Selvette 1bis/1 Bosco (PG) (comics and black and white manga)

ASTORINA S.R.I., via Boccaccio 32, 20123 Milano (Diabolik original and reprint black and white)

KING COMICS, via Pinerolo 3, 00182 Roma (comics)

Spain

The following are the country's comics and album publishers. If phoning from the USA, the country code of 0034 becomes 011 34

NORMA EDITORAL, Fluvià 89, 08019 Barcelona (licensed DC and Dark Horse comics and albums) 0034 93 303 68 20

EDITORIAL PLANETA-DE AGOSTINI, SA, Aribau 185, 08021 Barcelona (licensed Dark Horse comics and albums)

TOUTAIN EDITOR, SA, Diagonal 325, E-08009 Barcelona (licensed Marvel, Dark Horse, Chaos!, Image and manga comics and albums) 0034 93 344 06 00

EDICIONES LA CÚPULA, Plaza de las Beatas 3, E-08003 Barcelona (adult comics and albums) 0034 32 682 8 05

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CASTERMAN, 66 rue Bonaparte, 75006, Paris (albums and manga) (0033) 1 40 51 28 00

DARGAUD, 6 rue Gager Gabillot, 75015 Paris (albums and manga) (0033) 1 40 45 35 39

DELCOURT, 5 passage du Mont-Cenis, 75018 Paris (albums and comics) (0033) 1 53 41 86 10

FLUIDE GLACIAL, 33 avenue du Main, BP 187, 75755 Paris (comics and albums) (0033) 1 43 20 23 96

GLENAT, 31 rue Ernest Renan, 92130 Issy les Moulineaux (albums and manga) (0033) 1 41 46 11 11

J'AI LU, 84 rue de Grenelle, 75007 Paris (licenced Japanese manga) (0033) 1 44 39 34 70

LES HUMANOIDES ASSOCIES, 24 avenue Philippe Auguste, 75011 Paris (albums)(0033) 1 44 93 88 33

MARVEL, BP 62, 06702 St Laurent Duvar (0033) 1 92 12 57 57

SEMIC FRANCE, 45 rue Broca, 75005 Paris (licenced comics and albums) (0033) 1 43 36 32 00

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MARVEL ITALIA, viale Emilio Po' 380, 41100 Modena (Marvel licensed titles)

CULT COMICS, viale Emilio Po' 380, 41100 Modena (Image and Dark Horse licensed)

MAGIC PRESS, Zona industriale via Ragusa 18, 00040 Pavona, Roma (Vertigo and WildStorm licensed) fax: (0039) 06 93020361

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EDITORIAL PLANETA-DE AGOSTINI, SA, Aribau 185, 08021 Barcelona (licensed Dark Horse comics and albums)

TOUTAIN EDITOR, SA, Diagonal 325, E-08009 Barcelona (licensed Marvel, Dark Horse, Chaos!, Image and manga comics and albums) 0034 93 344 06 00

EDICIONES LA CÚPULA, Plaza de las Beatas 3, E-08003 Barcelona (adult comics and albums) 0034 32 682 8 05

Mail Order Specialists

Key to abbreviations used:

w/s	= wholesale available	CoBRA	= Comic Book Retailers' mail order protection scheme
dis	= bulk discount terms		
cat	= phone/write for catalogue	cc	= major credit cards accepted
s-cat	= sae for catalogue		
wants	= wants lists accepted	sae	= send stamped, addressed envelope with enquiry
s-wants	= sae with wants lists		

When telephoning from outside the UK, drop the first 0 and replace with: 01144 (USA); 0044 (mainland Europe & Eire); 001144 (Australasia).

Golden Age

Generally acknowledged as being published between 1938 and 1945, the first age of superhero comics, but herein designated to cover all pre-Silver Age American comics.

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 020 8446 3464

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 020 7836 5630

Quality Comics, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (CoBRA, cc)

Silver Acre Comics, PO Box 114, Chester CH4 8WQ (s-wants, cc) 01244 680 048 (fax: 680686)

Silver Age

Accepted as starting in 1955 with DC's superhero rebirth through ***Detective Comics*** *#225 (intro-ducing the Martian Manhunter) and* ***Showcase*** *#4 (introducing the Barry Allen Flash). Herein covering titles up to late 1960s.*

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 020 8446 3464

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

East Coast Comics UK, 28 Acton Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 7LG (high grade, s-want, cc, sae) 01502 578385 (day) 560727 (eve)

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 020 7836 5630

Quality Comics, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (CoBRA, cc)

Quicksilver Comics, PO Box 73, Ossett WF5 0YQ (s-cat, dis, wants, cc, CoBRA) 01924 270500 (fax: 270919)

Silver Acre Comics, PO Box 114, Chester CH4 8WQ (s-wants, cc) 01244 680 048 (fax 680686)

Post-Silver Age

Comics from 1970 to date: From Bronze Age-Marvel Age-Lead Age up to Platinum Age-Gimmick Age-Image Age. Historians will doubtless eventually decide on a name.

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 020 7836 5630

Planet Warehouse (FPI) *formerly Comics Warehouse* PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 01621 877244

Quality Comics, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (CoBRA, cc)

Tarpaulin Books and Comics, 5 Oak Close, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3EZ (wants, s-cat) 01842 820139

Hot Comics

Current or key titles, first issues or first appearances of major characters. Investment titles for speculators willing to gamble.

A Place in Space, 101 Church Street, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1RN (wants, cc, dis) 020 8686 2400

Comix-shop. co.uk, 7a High Street, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1JN (wants, cat, cc) 01628 777998

Advance Imports

US comics are not generally available in UK newsagents, except for some sea-freight shipped low-cover price DCs and Marvels, and can only be found through specialists in the rest of the world. The following companies offer air-shipped copies from all of the major US publishers.

Ace Comics, 63/64 High Street, Colchester, Essex (wants, cat, CoBRA, cc) 01206 561912

Avalon Comics, 143 Lavender Hill, London SW11 5QJ (cc, CoBRA) 020 7924 3609

Comix-shop.co.uk, 7a High Street, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1JN (wants, cat, cc) 01628 777998

86th Floor Comics & Cards, 6 Shipley Common Lane, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 8TR (dis, cat, cc) 0115 9443009

Forbidden Planet, 71 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1DG (s-cat cc) 020 7497 2150

Gosh! Strips by Mail, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH 020 7636 1011

Planet Warehouse (FPI) *formerly Comics Warehouse,* PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 01621 877244

Red Hot Comics, The Warehouse Block D Unit 8, Glenwood Business Park, Glenwood Place, Glasgow G45 9UH (CoBRA, w/s, dis, wants, cc) tel/fax: 0141 630 0049

Limited Editions

Many high-profile miniseries and one-shots are also available in limited, numbered and often autographed editions (s&n). New titles, to acquire copyright, can also appear in small print-run "ashcan" editions (ash).

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (CoBRA, cc, ash, s&n, cat) 020 8446 3464

Trading Cards

Several mail order dealers carry a range of non-sports cards and related peripherals (files, folders, sleeves).

Beyond Comics, 76 Harlescott Road, Nunhead, London SE15 3BZ (s-cat, s-wants, sae, CoBRA) tel/fax: 020 7564 4213

John McDonald: Non-Sport Trading Cards, 20 Alder Grove, Coatbridge, Lanarkshire ML5 3PT (cat, wants) tel/fax: 01236 433358

Old British Titles

The popularity of old British comics continues to increase as more dealers expand into this area. The following specialise in such titles.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP 020 8768 0022

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 020 8446 3464

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Weird Fantasy, 19 Decoy Road, Ormesby, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR29 3LG (s-cat, s-wants, annuals specialist)

Merchandise

Comics, film and TV-related t-shirts, posters, video games, badges, toys, action figures, etc.

Off World: The Sci-Fi Store, 142 Market Halls, Arndale Centre, Luton, Beds LU1 2TP. (specialists in Star Trek, Star Wars and sci-fi collectables) 01582 736256

Sci-Fi Merchandise Direct (FPI) and **Gear for Games (FPI)** Maldon, Essex CM9 4XD (cat) 01621 877222

Original Art

With artists having their originals returned by publishers, an increasing number of pages are now being made available for collectors.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP 020 8768 0022

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Silver Acre Comics, PO Box 114, Chester CH4 8WQ (s-wants, cc) 01244 680 048 (fax: 680686)

Peripherals

Acid-free protection for comics. Backing boards, protective bags, storage boxes, etc.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP 020 8768 0022

Just Comics, 65 Station Road, Warboys, Huntingdon, Cambs PE28 2TH (w/s only, CollectorLine™ distributor) 01487 824895 01487 824896

Planet Warehouse (FPI) *formerly Comics Warehouse,* PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 01621 877244

General Fantasy

As well as comics old and new, some suppliers also provide catalogues of multi-media fantasy, covering TV, film, trading cards and toys.

Forbidden Planet Mail Order, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP (cat) 020 7803 1900 (fax: 7803 1901)

Sci-Fi Merchandise Direct (FPI) and **Gear for Games (FPI)** Maldon, Essex CM9 4XD (cat) 01621 877222

Manga Titles

English language translations of Japanese comics and US titles drawn in the Japanese style.

United Publications, 85 Croydon Road, Keston, Kent BR2 8HU (ind, back, cat, wants, cc) 020 8325 9507

Alternative & Biographical

The following carry an extensive range of biographical and slice-of-life comicbooks and graphic novels (Fantagraphics, Maus, Crumb, Pekar...)

Gosh! Strips by Mail, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH (wants) 020 7636 1011

Knockabout Comics, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (w/s, s-cat, cc) 020 8969 2945 (fax: 8968 7614)

Page 45, 9 Market Street, Nottingham NG1 6HY 0115 9508045

Comics Auctions

Accepting lots from the general public, comics auctions provide an alternative way for collectors to sell their valuable comics. The following accept items for sale, as well as providing regular catalogues for mail order bids.

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Distributors

Anybody considering opening a comics shop or becoming a mail order dealer can obtain further information about the supply of titles from the following who bulk air import US and European comics and related items on a weekly basis.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP (graphic novels, art books, comics, remainders, film and TV, popular culture) 020 8768 0022

Diamond Comic Distributors, 2nd Floor, Warton House, 150 High Street, London E15 2NP (US and European comics, cards and related items) 020 8536 5730 (fax: 8536 5736)

Red Route Distribution, Unit 24, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (US & European comics/ graphic novels, back-list specialists) 020 8960 5855

Turnaround Publisher Services, Unit 3, Olympia Trading Estate, Coburg Road, Wood Green, London N22 6TZ (graphic novels, art books, film and TV, popular culture) 020 8829 3000

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The letters **(FPI)** after entries indicates that the company is part of **Forbidden Planet International Ltd**

Comic & Card Events
Events @ CAMDEN CENTRE
Bidborough St, London WC1

NOTE: DUE TO A PRODUCTION ERROR, INCORRECT DATES WERE LISTED IN THE LAST ISSUE OF COMICS INTERNATIONAL

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TOYS
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VIDEOS
HOW TO GET THERE. BUS: 68, 91, 168 or 188 to Woburn Place. UNDERGROUND: Piccadilly Line to Russell Square. NATIONAL RAIL: Euston and Kings Cross are within walking distance of the venue.
FUTURE DATE: 6TH JUNE 2004
Dealers: for table availability phone 020 747 66 873
www.comicmart.co.uk

Events

A summary of all the events advertised this issue

February

21/2 Sheffield: Comic Mart & Card Show, Main Hall, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street ..... (p56)

28/2 Birmingham: Comic Mart & Card Show, The Clarendon Suites, Hagley Road, Birmingham ..... (p56)

28/5 London: Mark Millar and Bryan Hitch signing at Forbidden Planet Megastore, Shaftesbury Avenue ..... (p27)

March

6-7/3 London: London Film & Comic Con with special guests, Hall 1, Wembley Exhibition Centre ..... (p11)

7/3 London: Comicbook Marketplace, Camden Centre, Bidborough Street [NOTE: not at The Royal National Hotel as previously listed] ..... (p66)

13/3 Manchester: Comic Mart & Card Show, Sachas Hotel, Tib Street, Piccadilly, Manchester ..... (p56)

14/3 Liverpool: Comic Mart & Card Show, Gladstone Hotel, Lord Nelson Street, Liverpool ..... (p56)

14/3 London: Card Mart, Camden Centre, Bidborough Street ..... (p66)

27/3 Glasgow: Scottish Comics, Card & Collectables Fair, James Moir Hall (Mitchell Theatre) Granville Street ..... (p35)

27/3 Leeds: Comic Mart & Card Show, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p56)

April

3/4 Newcastle: Comic Mart & Card Show, University of Northumbria, Students' Union Ballroom, Sandyford Road ..... (p56)

4/4 London: Comicbook Marketplace, Camden Centre, Bidborough Street [NOTE: not at The Royal National Hotel as previously listed] ..... (p66)

10/4 Nottingham: Comic Mart & Card Show, Victoria Leisure Centre, Gedling Street, Nottingham ..... (p56)

16/4 London: Comix: The Underground Revolution launch and panel at Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Mall ..... (p26)

17-18/4 Birmingham: Memorabilia '04, Birmingham NEC ..... (p24)

May

1/5 Manchester: Comic Mart & Card Show, Sachas Hotel, Tib Street, Piccadilly, Manchester ..... (p56)

2/5 London: The National Comicbook Marketplace and Card Mart, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way ..... (p66)

8/5 Leeds: Comic Mart & Card Show, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p56)

22/5 Newcastle: Comic Mart & Card Show, University of Northumbria, Students' Union Ballroom, Sandyford Road ..... (p56)

29/5 Birmingham: Comic Mart & Card Show, The Clarendon Suites, Hagley Road, Birmingham ..... (p56)

29-30/5 Bristol: Comic Festival 2004 ..... (p9)

June

6/6 London: The National Comicbook Marketplace and Card Mart, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way ..... (p66)

19/6 Manchester: Comic Mart & Card Show, Sachas Hotel, Tib Street, Piccadilly, Manchester ..... (p56)

20/6 Liverpool: Comic Mart & Card Show, Gladstone Hotel, Lord Nelson Street, Liverpool ..... (p56)

22/6 Nottingham: Comic Mart & Card Show, Victoria Leisure Centre, Gedling Street, Nottingham ..... (p56)

July

3/7 Leeds: Comic Mart & Card Show, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p56)

Please note: the above listing of UK comics, trading card and related events is free to Comics International display advertisers only.

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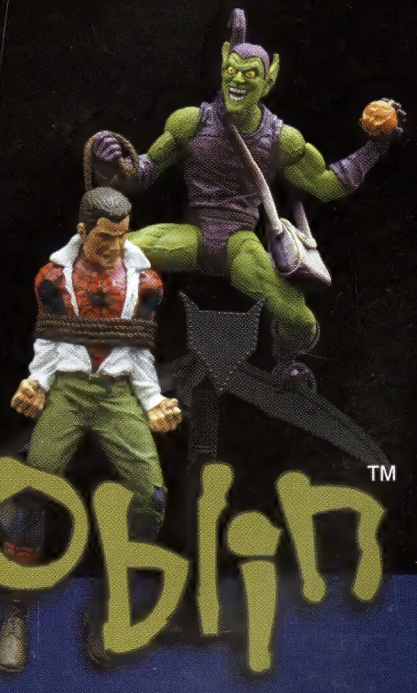

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